

Australian Garden HISTORY

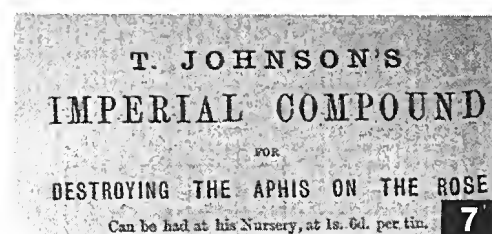
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Summer Gardens



AUSTRALIAN
GARDEN
HISTORY
SOCIETY



Mission

The Australian Garden History Society will be the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.

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Viewpoint

In Need of a Hug

Ken Duxbury's article 'By Channels of Coolness', in the last issue of *Australian Garden History*, highlighted a strong and interesting garden design style. These often grotesque designs were made to look 'exotic' but were wonderfully indigenous with their confident use of our native plants.

The tree ferns at the Fern Tree Bower, near Hobart, were more functional as they shaded picnic tables. However, this planting, washed away in 1960, really brought out the sculptural qualities of the plant: something which Fiona Hall achieved in her 'Fern Garden' at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra.

The ease of transplanting tree ferns, together with their cultural popularity, has been devastating on wild fern communities. These gentle giants are today still being stolen from the district of Fern Tree. Tasmanian tree ferns are for sale in nurseries as far afield as the United Kingdom – all 'saved' by licensed operators from our logging coups. Ironically the tree fern is tough enough to survive the fires and clearing practices of the wood chipping industry.

All this gives the tree fern an extra special place in historic and contemporary gardens. Tree ferns are definitely in need of a hug.

Torquil Canning

Torquil Canning lives at Fern Tree in Tasmania. He practised landscape design, particularly in private gardens. His work includes the memorial garden at Port Arthur. More recently he has been turning his attention to writing magazine articles and fiction.

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A Garden Restoration

Invergowrie

At Invergowrie homestead near Armidale in northern NSW, the present custodians are ensuring that the restoration and re-instatement of period gardens are not limited to high profile or publicly-owned historic properties.

While it is expected that the grounds of well-known properties, such as Sydney's Vaucluse House, should again resemble their horticultural heyday, the diligent restoration of private domestic gardens is much less common. Changing lifestyles, new trends in landscaping and perhaps an unjustified belief that old-fashioned gardens require more maintenance, may account for this. Too often a garden of a different era sets off an old, restored house, doing neither the house, nor the garden full justice.

Invergowrie's fourth and fifth generation owners – Doug, David and Lee Moffatt – together with Ian Telford, a retired botanist, have returned the property to something of its former glory. All believe it is important that gardens should be of a design appropriate to the era of the house. At Invergowrie the philosophy of restoration is simple: replace like with like, and where possible use material and species of the correct period. The result is a living link to the earliest European settlement in the area.

In January 1866, James Mitchell, Mr Doug Moffatt's great-grandfather, selected the first 100 acres of what became a well-known New England property of about 6,500 acres. By the early 1870s he had built the first section of the present house and laid

out some of the gardens, including a highly productive kitchen garden to the east of the house. The site is a basalt knoll, at 1000m altitude, one kilometre west of the crest of the Great Dividing Range and 16km west of Armidale. In the original front garden Mitchell planted two Funeral cypresses (*Chamaecyparis funebris*) and photinias in the classic Victorian fashion of two symmetrical pairs.

When one of the cypresses was lost in a storm in early 1996, it was decided to retain the original format, and that tree has been replaced with the same species – as others will be as necessary. This philosophy has been extended to the 200m drive and to extensive windbreaks, where Mitchell planted Monterey (*Pinus radiata*), Chir (*P. roxburghii*), and Bunya (*Araucaria bidwilli*) pines in 1876.

. . . a living link to the earliest European settlement in the area . . .

In 1916 the property passed into the hands of Mr Doug Moffatt's grandfather, John Martin Moffatt, an enthusiastic and competent gardener who established formal rose beds. Upon his death the property went to his sons Norman (Mr Doug Moffatt's father) and John when, because of the wars and subsequent labour shortages, the gardens were grassed over for easier maintenance. Apart from some alterations to the garden boundaries as original fences collapsed, things remained that way for about 45 years until 1990, when the restoration commenced. Indeed when Mr Doug Moffatt and a nephew, David, purchased the property from another family member in 1986, the garden was an almost bare block.



By **Tim Hughes**

Top left:
Invergowrie Homestead in
1908 from the north-east
showing the kitchen garden

Top centre:
The same area in 1974

Top right:
Invergowrie kitchen garden
from the east, Summer 2000



The form of the restoration was a choice between that of 'a point in time' approach or some other approach. The main entrance had changed three times as modes of transport altered over the years. Because each generation has made its own contribution without completely erasing traces of what its predecessors had done, the garden today is a composite of the contributions from four generations. The style of replacement fences, gates and structures also borrow from each generation.

Photos taken about 1908, simple line drawings done in the late 1970s, and recollections by older members of the family, all helped to put together a fairly accurate idea of the garden's layout. As work progressed two surprise discoveries further helped authenticate the restoration.

Among the first tasks undertaken was the relocation of a number of recently planted, but inappropriately placed trees. Once the overall plan was decided, outer garden fences were rebuilt, and herbaceous borders set out along the fence-lines of the original house: as they were before the construction of out-buildings later incorporated into the garden.

The funeral cypresses and photinias were re-incorporated into the garden and under-planted with perennials including aquilegia, helleborus, Japanese anemones and hostas. Unfortunately, no photographs, memories or other details existed to guide the appearance of the surrounding beds. Then, a chance digging revealed the first surprise discovery leading to the recreation of the original formal entrance garden. Further excavation revealed a circular entrance path and flanking beds and paths, the work of great-grandfather

Mitchell, reflecting the Victorian aspect of the garden hidden by grass for more than 80 years.

East of the house, the kitchen garden was re-laid with 10 long, narrow, east-west running beds, as was the fashion at the time. A grape trellis, similar to the original supporting an isabella grape (*Vitus x alexanderi* 'Isabella'), was rebuilt and the grape variety replanted.

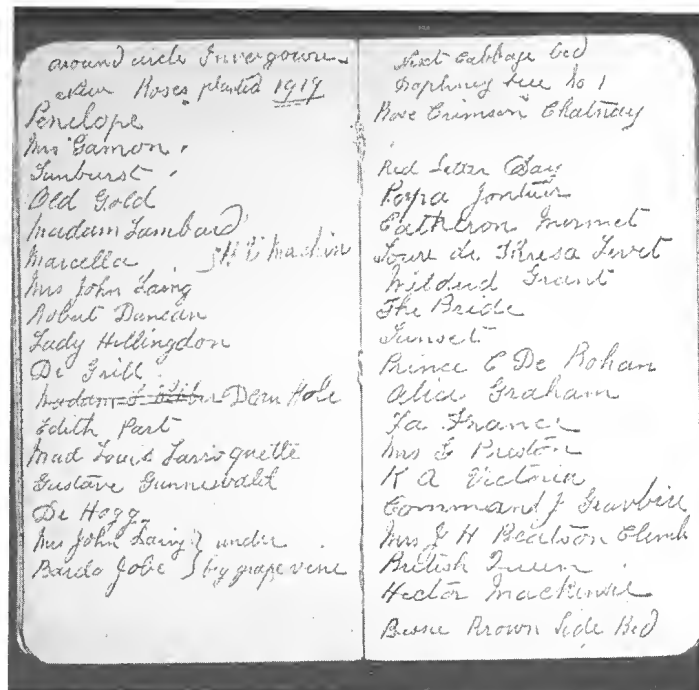
The re-establishment of the rose garden makes a particularly romantic story. Mr Martin Moffat was a rose aficionado. A splendid photograph shows him proudly standing among the ornate, geometric garden beds he designed at Yarrowyck, another family property which then adjoined Invergowrie to the west.

While no photographs have been found to reveal the entire original rose garden layout at Invergowrie, the existence of an English box (*Buxus sempervirens*) at one end and an overgrown japonica (*Chaenomeles* sp.) at the other, suggested these were probably in round beds, and clipped to domes. A photograph and family recollection of a diamond-shaped centre bed provided another key element of the layout. Very similar layouts existed in pattern books, so it was fairly easy for the restorers to recreate the design. Beds have been surrounded by original edging tiles: some found in a shed, and others, literally, unearthed.

And then, the second surprise discovery made the recreation of the rose garden as authentic as possible. Found in a journal belonging to Mr Martin Moffatt was a list of 34 roses planted in 1919, including the location of some individual

Top left:
The northern verandah of the oldest section of the homestead with the climbing noisette 'Mme Alfred Carriere', October 2001

Top right:
Surviving from the 1919 planting, the tea rose 'Mme Lombard' is now supported by a folly built in September 2001



John Martin Moffatt's rose planting list 1919

plants. Of the 13 from the list still being grown commercially in Australia, 11 are thriving in the Invergowrie garden. Two others are still available but have proved hard to establish. Some of those extinct, such as 'Sunburst' and 'Bardou Job', are represented by genetic offspring, similar in appearance ('Pax' and 'Blackboy' respectively), while 'Gustav Grunerwald', unavailable in Australia, is represented by 'Sunny South'.

The search for roses solved some other mysteries. While 'Penelope' appears on the 1919 list, the widely known English hybrid musk of the same name was not bred until five years later. It was then discovered that John Williams had bred a tea rose of that name in 1906. According to rose authority John Cox, it is the oldest Australian-bred rose still grown. Among the other 80 varieties of pre-1920 roses planted throughout the garden, is the 1861 moss rose 'James Mitchell', which shares its name with Invergowrie's original owner who, by happy coincidence, married the year the rose was bred. The construction, last year, of a lath and lattice shade-house at the northern entrance to the garden completed the restoration of the rose garden. It evokes the spirit of a much earlier, but similarly placed, structure.

In keeping with the practicalities of a contemporary private residence, some concessions have been made throughout the Invergowrie garden. Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), originally on the northern verandah, has been replaced by the period climbing rose 'Mme Alfred Carriere' to avoid damaging the structure of the house. Beds, including those in the rose garden, are now densely under-planted, whereas a century ago bare earth was more likely under shrubs. There are also new design elements in the garden, including a white garden and a water feature.

The Invergowrie garden has been open on several occasions as part of Australia's Open Garden Scheme and for other events. The garden itself, and the way its restoration was approached, provides a useful model for those interested in restoring old gardens. And, believing there is a desire for more information about heritage gardens, Mr Telford is also encouraging the formation of a northern NSW branch of the Australian Garden History Society.



Invergowrie Homestead and rose garden site from the south-west in 1908



The rose garden site and shade house in 1908

Invergowrie Roses

The main rose gardens at Invergowrie date from 1919. Two old tea roses, 'Mme Lombard' and 'Duchesse de Brabant', still survive in the garden from that period. The following roses were on John Martin Moffatt's 1919 planting list and are once again in the Invergowrie garden.

Moss Rose	Mme Louise Leveque
Hybrid Perpetuals	Mrs John Laing Prince Camille de Rohan Souvenir de Therese Levet
Tea Roses	Catherine Mermet Dr Grill Lady Hillingdon Mme Lombard Papa Gontier Penelope (Williams, Australia 1906) The Bride

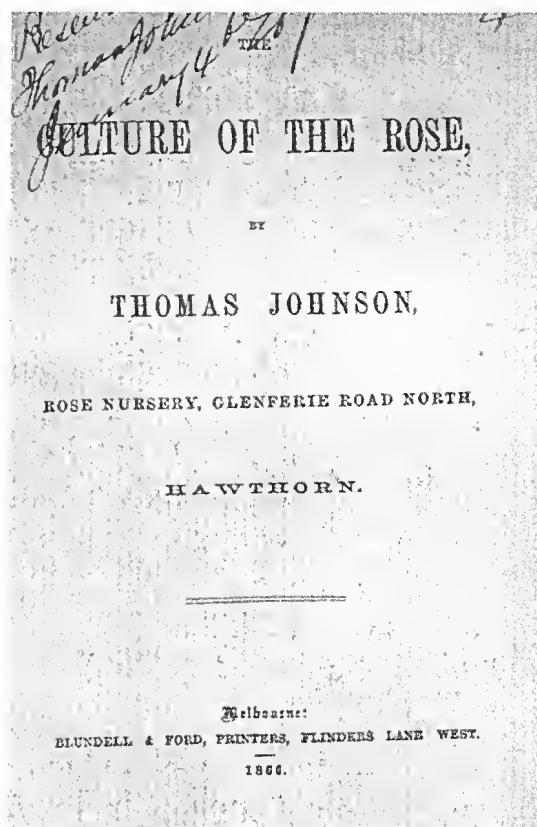
Acknowledgments:

Historic photographs:	Courtesy Mr D. Moffatt
Contemporary photographs:	Mr I. Telford

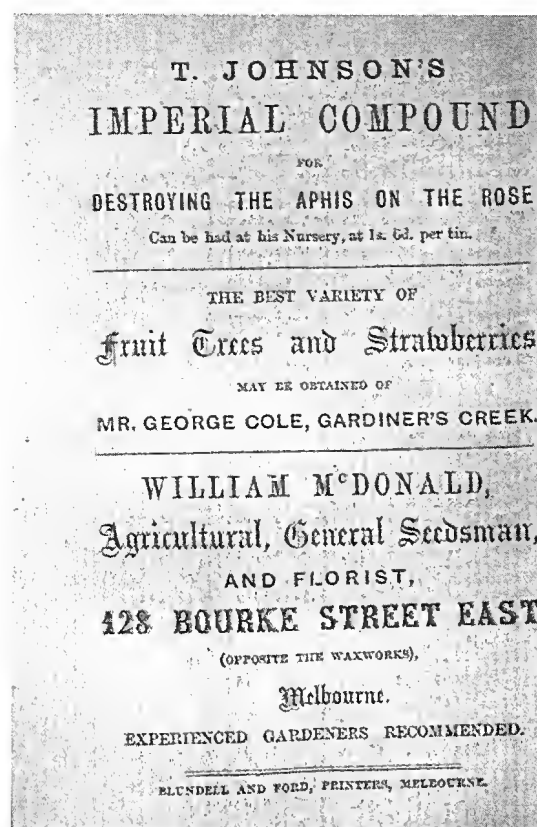
The writer is indebted to Doug Moffatt and Ian Telford whose interest and assistance in providing information and illustrations have greatly enriched this account of the garden at Invergowrie. Thanks also go to Christopher Cooper from the Botany Department, University of New England, Armidale, for assisting with the images.

Tim Hughes is a journalist and sixth-generation grazier who lives on a property near Glen Innes, in northern New South Wales. With his wife Sal Molesworth and three young children, he is planning an interpretative restoration of his family's late-Victorian homestead garden.

Thomas Johnson, rosarian



Title page of Thomas Johnson's *Culture of the Rose*, published in 1866



Advertisement for T. Johnson's Imperial Compound for Destroying the Aphis on the Rose

This story of Thomas Johnson illustrates the patient, persistent research work that pieces together the tissue of garden history.

Many historians acknowledge Thomas Johnson as the writer of the first Australian book dedicated specifically to rose growing. *The Culture of the Rose* was published in 1866.¹ In his preface to the book, Ferdinand von Mueller described it as 'an excellent treatise on the culture of the rose', and recommended the 'directions offered by so observant a man as Mr Thomas Johnson'.²

Some time around 1850 Johnson had arrived in Victoria from his native Cambridgeshire, and by the 1860s and 1870s he was a prolific winner of prizes for his roses at horticultural shows.

In 1866, his rose nursery, in Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn,³ was 'replete with the finest varieties now in cultivation' and he advertised regularly in the *South Bourke Standard*, inviting the public to inspect his collection of roses. He also sold 'T. Johnson's Imperial Compound for Destroying the Aphis on the Rose'.⁴

But while Johnson had a reputation as a rose-grower, he was also known as a vocal and controversial figure in local affairs. There was a report that he 'watches with a lynx-eyed jealousy

the proceedings of the Council, in order to warn rate-payers when in danger...'⁵

Indeed the same correspondent wished 'the day may be long distant when this gentleman shall reach the goal of his ambition – death or a seat at the Municipal Council Board.'⁶

After unsuccessfully standing for election to the Boroondara Council for many years, Johnson was finally elected in 1874. However, he 'made himself disagreeable to his colleagues during his period of office', demonstrated 'eccentric conduct', and succeeded in 'causing confusion at intervals in the council'.⁷

Johnson was also a vocal member of the horticultural community. He was behind moves, in 1864, to improve conditions for market gardeners at the wholesale fruit and vegetable market.⁸ He also engaged in a public argument with nursery proprietor William Elliott of Ballarat about whether or not exhibitors should be allowed to distribute catalogues to visitors at the Ballarat Flower Show, the Committee of Management having discouraged 'all attempts at making the show room a place of business.' His fiery letter to the *Farmer's Journal and Gardener's Chronicle* stated 'I am not satisfied with that portion of the committee that told me I should not distribute my catalogues...'⁹

In 1878 he disappeared from the public eye after he was declared insolvent with his son, Arthur Thomas Metcalf Johnson, who had a music business in Hawthorn.

T. JOHNSON, GARDENER AND FLORIST

GLENFERRIE ROAD NORTH, HAWTHORN,

BEGS to Invite the Public to inspect his
COLLECTION of ROSES during the Autumn
blooming, from which they will be enabled to make
a choice selection.

See Catalogue for Prices.

Press advertisement for Johnson's Rose Collection

While compiling the entry for *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*,¹⁰ on Thomas Johnson, a rosarian working in Hawthorn in the 1860s and 1870s, I recalled reading about 'Mr Thos. Johnson, the veteran rose-grower' breeding roses at his nursery in Mentone in the early 1890s. This, I thought, must be the same man. But what had he been doing in the intervening years? Thus began my search for the full story of Thomas Johnson. It took me from Hawthorn to Preston and Mentone.

The last mention of Thomas Johnson as a competitor in rose shows was in 1878, shortly after his daughter Agnes married John Thomas Ellison, a gardener from Preston.¹¹ It seemed to be more than a coincidence that, from 1879, Mr Ellison of Preston suddenly appeared as a notable grower of roses and winner of prizes. Thomas Johnson's name rarely appeared during the early 1880s, although the catalogue of the 'Cut Rose' section of the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880 listed 'Ellison and Johnson, Spring-street, Preston'.

Thomas Johnson seemed to have passed on his enthusiasm for the rose to his son-in-law. In 1888, it was mentioned that Mr Ellison had 'purchased a splendid property of seven acres at Preston, where he now resides, devoting his time to the cultivation of roses, a branch of horticulture in which he has been very successful, having obtained over 100 prizes at various exhibitions, including the International one of 1880-81.'¹²

Although Thomas Johnson, as an individual exhibitor in shows, was not mentioned for ten years, it can only be assumed that he was heavily involved with his son-in-law's exhibits. In a letter to the editor of the *Australasian*, 28 August 1886, he wrote from Spring Street, Preston, as 'one who has taken much interest in the growth of the queen of flowers as any man in Victoria' with strong suggestions about how the rose should be judged. Within two months of this letter, the *Australasian* reported that 'Mr J. T. Ellison, of the Spring-street Nursery, Preston'¹³ was submitting specimens of several fine roses.

Throughout the 1880s J. T. Ellison continued to win many prizes, but Thomas Johnson was rarely mentioned until the *Australasian*, 8 December 1888, recorded 'A New Dark Rose . . . a very dark rose [is] reported to have been raised by Mr Thos. Johnson of Como Parade, Mentone, . . . The plants having been removed from Preston, and the season being hot and dry, no attempt being made to force them into bloom at this ungenial season.'

The question was why did Thomas Johnson move from Preston to Mentone?

During the land boom of the late 1880s in Melbourne, Mr Ellison had invested in land with his wife's brother, Arthur

Thomas Metcalf Johnson. The largest parcel of this land was in Como Parade, Mentone. Thomas Johnson's nursery business was set up in one of these lots¹⁴ and he continued to breed new roses in Mentone and was often mentioned in the horticultural columns of papers from 1888 to 1895. The *Australasian*, 1 November 1890, recorded 'Mr Thos. Johnson's New Roses: It is well known to the principal rosarians that Mr Thos. Johnson, formerly of Preston, where he achieved distinction as a grower of roses and also as a raiser of several excellent varieties, has been pursuing his favourite occupation at Mentone.'

In 1889 Thomas Johnson presented some of his new roses to the Governor of Victoria, the Earl of Hopetoun, and named one of them after him. The 'Earl of Hopetoun' rose later became the cause of some controversy. In the *Australasian*, 1 December 1894, Mr Johnson wrote from Rose Villa, Como Parade, Mentone, that 'the rose sent out by someone, and [which] is now causing so much disappointment, is not the Earl of Hopetoun that I raised and obtained His Excellency's permission to name as above in 1889.' There was a response. A week later J. Burton, from Woodrow Nursery, Heidelberg, claimed he had named one of his roses 'Earl of Hopetoun', saying he was 'surprised and pained to have my honour questioned by Mr T. Johnson of Mentone.'¹⁵ Undaunted, Thomas Johnson included 'Earl of Hopetoun' in his catalogue of new seedling roses of his own raising for 1895.¹⁶

After his wife's death in 1898, Johnson moved back to Preston, presumably to be near his daughter and son-in-law, and no more is heard about his rose-growing. When Thomas Johnson died, aged 86, on 9 May 1907, he was buried in an unmarked grave in Boroondara Cemetery – the cemetery for which, in his council days, he was one of the first trustees.

- 1 Thomas Johnson, *The Culture of the Rose*, Blundell and Ford, Melbourne, 1866
- 2 *ibid.*
- 3 It seems likely that Johnson Street, which runs east from Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, is named after Thomas Johnson. (Hawthorn Peppercorns, Gwen McWilliam, 1978, Pub. Brian Atkins.)
- 4 Thomas Johnson, *The Culture of the Rose*, Blundell and Ford, Melbourne, 1866 p.32
- 5 *The South Bourke Standard*, 5 September 1862
- 6 *The South Bourke Standard*, 5 September 1862
- 7 *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, 15 August 1877
- 8 *South Bourke Standard*, 20 May 1864
- 9 *Farmer's Journal and Gardener's Chronicle*, 4 December 1863
- 10 *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* is to be published next year.
- 11 John Thomas Ellison was later the first President of the Preston Shire Council, a Justice of the Peace, and he took a 'keen interest in all local matters' (*Victoria and its Metropolis: Past and Present*, Vol. II B 1888 by Alexander Sutherland, pub. McCarron, Bird & Co., Melbourne)
- 12 *Victoria and its Metropolis: Past and Present*, Vol. II B 1888 by Alexander Sutherland, pub. McCarron, Bird & Co., Melbourne
- 13 *Australasian*, 23 October 1886
- 14 The Johnson's house was later next door to 'Simpson's School', a well-respected school for young ladies in the early 1900s. The house was converted to an Art Room for Mentone Grammar School in the early 1960s and was demolished in 1984 to make way for a carpark.
- 15 *Australasian*, 8 December 1894
- 16 *Leader*, 8 June 1895 p. 13

Acknowledgments:

Richard Aitken for his encouragement and advice, Gwen McWilliam for references in the *South Bourke Standard* and Helen Doyle for references from the *Farmer's Journal and Gardener's Chronicle*.

Helen Botham is a part-time garden history researcher who has recently completed the entry on Thomas Johnson for the forthcoming publication *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*. Her interest in garden history developed while she was carrying out horticultural research for Rippon Lea, one of the National Trust gardens in Melbourne.



Bishops Court from the south-western corner of the property, 2001
Photo: Robin Page

Bishops Court

East Melbourne

By Wendy Dwyer

Bishops Court is one of the oldest properties in East Melbourne and has been the residence of the Anglican Bishop, later Archbishop, of Melbourne since 1853. Although the garden has been in decline for some time, the two-acre site has been only slightly altered and a number of the original plants remain. It is the last intact urban estate within the City of Melbourne.

Early Days

Bishop Perry, the first Bishop of Melbourne, selected the site in 1848 and the grant was issued on 18 February 1851. From his arrival in the colony Perry had rented a cottage at Jolimont, on Governor La Trobe's land, just a short distance away.¹ Thus he knew the local area well. He had rejected larger sites, further from Melbourne, as he wanted to be within walking distance of his parishioners.

A prime site in East Melbourne, its main views at the time were south across Jolimont and Richmond Paddock, (later Yarra Park), to the Yarra River Flats and the Domain beyond. The Fitzroy Gardens to the west of the site were not developed until the 1860s. Many speculators, who had done well out of the gold rush, and professional people such as lawyers, members of parliament and government officials, were keen to purchase land in East Melbourne. Attracted by its convenient location they also believed that the presence of the Bishop's residence would ensure a good neighbourhood.

The House

The architects, Newson and Blackburn, called for tenders in 1849. James Blackburn was a pardoned convict who had been transported to Van Diemen's Land for forgery. He is best remembered as the designer of Melbourne's Yan Yean water supply system although he also designed St Mark's Church in Fitzroy.



Wisteria on original bluestone building, 2001
Photo: Robin Page

Bishops Court is located on an elevated site at 120 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne, opposite the Fitzroy Gardens, with views to the west of the Melbourne Central Business District. The site also has frontages to Gipps and Hotham Streets. The latitude of Melbourne is 37° 48' 52" S and its longitude is 144° 58' 58" E. The average annual rainfall for the area is 657.3mm with readings of 48.4mm for January and 50.0mm for June. The average temperature for January is 20° C and for June is 10.4° C. Soil type is sandy loam.



North-west corner of Bishops court in 1892 showing cordylines and cypresses
Photo: Charles Rudd, courtesy of Melbourne Diocesan Archives

The site was partly cleared and construction began, but in 1851 work was delayed due to the extensive Black Thursday bushfires that disrupted business and society. The start of the Gold Rush in August of the same year also caused labour shortages. These events resulted in the initial contract being broken, and the architects Russell and Thomas calling for tenders to complete the construction. Costing double its original estimate, Bishops court was finally ready for occupation in January 1853.

One of the earliest descriptions of the house and garden was that of the Reverend George Goodman, newly arrived from England, who visited on 15 December, 1853. He wrote in his diary

It is a small clustered mansion, with Italian tower over the entrance, a verandah runs along the front, corresponding to the three west windows of the drawing room, a large bay window constituting its southern look out. The lawn is like certain grounds familiar to myself near Birmingham. At present, a large portion is given to a kitchen garden, on which there is growing a plentiful crop of potatoes. The entrance to the grounds is by a gateway of the rudest majestic proportions, whilst a very respectable mulberry forms a nucleus of a pleasing shrubbery. The house is roomy and comfortable inside and, what is of chief importance in this scorching Christmas weather, is delightfully cool.²

The Grounds

Architect Charles Swyer was engaged in 1854 to lay out the grounds although few details of this work are known. This connection came about when Bishop Perry appointed Swyer's minister in England, the Reverend David Seddon, to a new parish in St Kilda in 1852. Swyer volunteered to follow him to Australia to design the new church, including its landscaping. This work greatly impressed the Bishop.³ Swyer's early experience had been with the Manchester and Leeds Railway Company where he appears to have developed a greater interest in landscape design than architecture. At this time in England the picturesque style of garden design, where designers attempted to imitate nature by creating landscapes in the manner of pictures, was giving way to the gardenesque style. This style represented a more

deliberately contrived approach in order to display the individual beauty of plant materials and the art of the gardener, often blending into a natural or wild garden beyond. It may be seen in one of Swyer's most famous works at Glenara, Bulla, designed during the period he was in partnership with Albert Purchas (1855-1861). Depicted by the renowned landscape painter, Eugene von Guerard, Glenara is considered a notable example of the gardenesque style in post-gold rush Victoria.⁴ A much larger site than Bishops court, formal planting was used around the house, gradually giving way to the natural landscape beyond. This is the design that was used at Bishops court.

Besides being commissioned to work on Bishops court, Swyer went on to become Diocesan Architect, and later private architect to Bishop Perry. A testimonial written by Perry for Swyer states that

...when I was first acquainted with him he held an important office, and whilst, holding it, he very kindly undertook (without any remuneration) to lay out the grounds at Bishops court. This work he executed with great taste, and I was led from it to form a very high opinion of his ability.⁵



Western façade Bishops court in 1892 showing Corroboree Tree on right
Photo: Charles Rudd, courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives

There are only two known references relating to the specific work undertaken by Swyer in relation to the Bishops court garden. In a letter to Bishop Perry dated 11 December 1854, Swyer notes

I have given instructions to Messrs McArthur and Westgarth to deliver to Bishops court, 612 flags [flagstones], 22 inches square. I have managed to get the flags 3d cheaper than they first mentioned to me, and they are to cart them to Bishops court.⁶

These flagstones were used to construct a terrace around the southern and eastern sides of the house, helping to link the house and garden. This was considered to be very English as the use of the verandahs was the common design used in warmer colonies.⁷

The second reference is an entry in Swyer's letter-book, dated 20 June 1856, which records an order for 'carting and supplying broken bluestone metal to the Bishop's Palace'.⁸ It is likely that this was used for the garden paths and carriageway.

While there is documentary evidence to support Swyer's involvement in the hard landscaping of Bishops court, it appears that the design of the house and garden and their relationship was determined by the architects Blackburn and Newton.⁹ They carefully set the house in the north-east quadrant of the site, adjacent to an ancient *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum) thus allowing for a large garden aspect to the west and south.

Bishops court in the Nineteenth Century

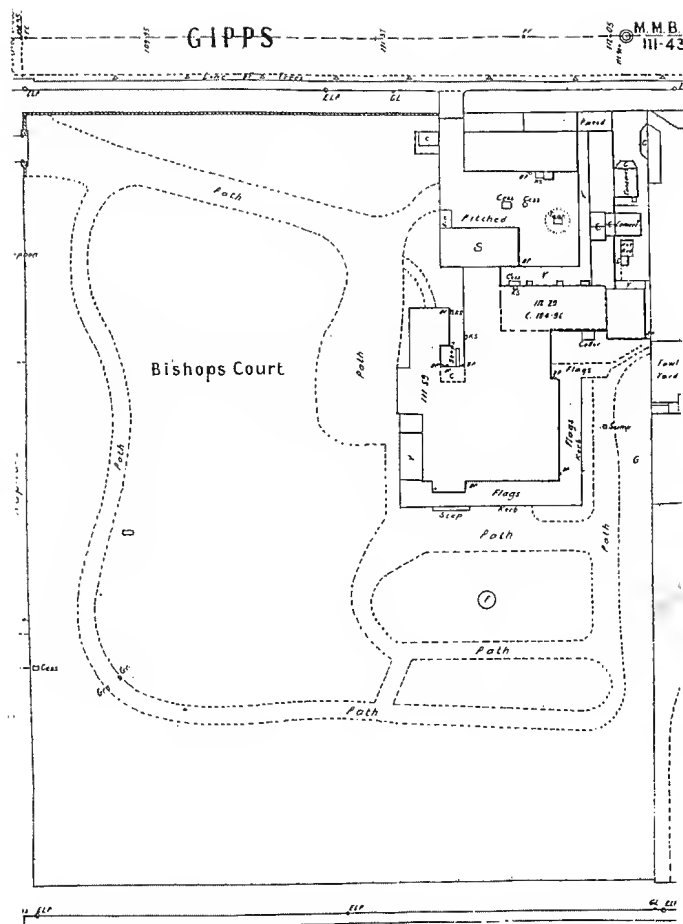
James Sinclair, later curator of the Fitzroy Gardens provides an early description of the garden at Bishops court in 1856. He found that

*The contrast is most pleasing, between the dark foliage of the Australian trees, the stone walls of the substantial buildings and the tower attached to the body of the principal one, all being high, and healthily placed. Among other fine spreading trees, there are now some acacia and other pinnate-leaved [sic] plants now in the evening, going to sleep as the golden sun of Australia on one side is sinking beneath the hills, and the blue sea and the silver moon is lighting up the horizon on the other.*¹⁰

There has been some debate on whether William Guilfoyle did any work at Bishops court. In his 1875 annual report on the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, Guilfoyle noted that he had removed from Bishops court 1,093 plants which had been purchased by his department, and re-planted them at the Botanic Gardens. Given that Guilfoyle had recently taken up his new role as Director of the Botanic Gardens, and was a Roman Catholic, it seems unlikely that he had any input into the garden designs at Bishops court. There is no additional documentary evidence to support Guilfoyle's further involvement.¹¹

The 1899 MMBW Plan is the most comprehensive early plan available of the site, and it shows that the house was originally surrounded by garden on three sides. By siting the main entrance in the north-west corner, a visitor's first impression was of a sweeping vista across the expansive lawn, edged with garden beds giving an illusion of spaciousness and of much larger grounds than actually exist. The design continued the grand proportions of the adjacent Fitzroy Gardens. The gravelled serpentine driveway, which widened in front of the house to allow carriages to turn, offered views of the western and southern lawn and garden as the house was approached. It then linked into the formal garden paths south of the house and around the perimeter of the main lawn. The original view, looking out from inside the house through the bay window onto the immediate garden, the Cathedral Reserve, Richmond Paddock (Yarra Park) and the river beyond, would have been very attractive.¹²

Photographic evidence records that the layout of the garden was well-established in the gardenesque fashion by the end of the nineteenth century. Two photographs of the western aspect of the house and garden, taken in 1892 by Charles Rudd, show that the lawn with a bed of mixed planting was dominated by a large *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, often referred to as the Corroboree Tree. Thought to be approximately 500 years old, the story is told that when Baron von Mueller inspected it, he suggested that it was probably a sapling when Cranmer wrote the Prayer Book in 1549.



MMBW Survey Plan of Bishops court, 1899

Adjacent to the house was a mixed shrubbery of carefully placed and cultivated specimen plants reflecting the gardenesque approach. These included *Cordyline australis* (New Zealand Cabbage Tree), *Cupressus torulosa* (Bhutan cypress) and other trees, edged with annual bedding plants. A similar planting style was also evident in the formal garden south of the house where curved gravel paths with borders enclosed the lawns. Focal points of interest were the fountain and sundial that can still be seen today. Originally surrounded by carefully cultivated planting, these elements were typical of the gardenesque style.



The new red-brick wing, added in 1903.
Photo: Courtesy Melbourne, Diocesan Archives.



Other photographs show that the south-eastern corner of the main lawn was occupied by a large island bed including *Callitris* spp. (Cypress pines) and variegated shrubs. A juvenile elm, now mature, may also be identified in the southern bed, adjacent to the gravel path.

After Bishop Perry left in 1874 to go back to England to select a bishop for a new diocese based in Ballarat, Bishops court temporarily became Victoria's Government House until 1876 when the building of the new Government House was completed. During this period, the governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen and Lady Bowen resided at Bishops court, as did the Chief Justice Sir William Stawell who was Acting-Governor while the Bowens were in Europe on leave.

The next resident of Bishops court, Bishop James Moorhouse, is reported to have enjoyed the large, old River Red Gum often sitting 'under its branching shade... [to] think out his notable sermons and addresses, his faithful dog Tim lying tirelessly on the ground beside him.'¹³ His affinity for this particular spot was evident in 1884 when he chose to bury the white bulldog near the old gum tree, marking the grave with a bluestone slab bearing the inscription 'In Memory of Dear Old Tim, a friend true and tried.'¹⁴ Archbishop Harrington Lees, who occupied Bishops court from 1920-1929, continued this tradition. He buried his terrier in the garden next to Tim. Although the gravestones have since disappeared, they are often mentioned in commentaries on the garden.

Bishops court in the Twentieth Century

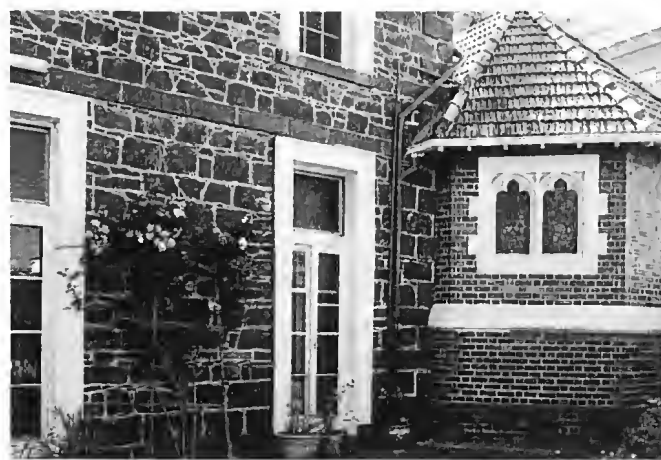
On 4 October 1902, after Bishop Field Flowers Goe had vacated Bishops court, *The Australasian* reported that the residence had been described as 'out of date, out of repair and in an insanitary state'. Further, it was 'recommended by a committee of the Diocese to be demolished', and this was 'viewed with regret by members of the Anglican Church and by old colonists of every creed.'¹⁵

After much deliberation a compromise was reached. The northern bluestone wing was demolished. A red brick wing with a tiled roof, in Federation Queen Anne Domestic style, replaced it. The small chapel on the eastern side of the wing was a feature of the new building. These renovations, designed by architects Inskip and Butler, and built by Frank Nixon, included some minor alterations to the garden and

cost £3,000. Walter Butler was a talented landscape architect. In England he had worked for a time with William Morris, pioneer of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. Butler shared Morris's beliefs in the advantages of architects designing gardens, and he favoured formality in garden design complemented by naturally flowing plantings. While he was working at Bishops court, Butler expressed these views in a paper delivered to the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in June 1903.

*If a garden is as much a work of man's art as his house is, it is – owing to their oneness, and inseparableness – as much the architect's business to design the garden as to design the house.'*¹⁶

At Bishops court it was recorded that 'the grounds are being re-arranged and laid out, and will form pleasant surroundings to the buildings.'¹⁷ Inskip and Butler's intention was to maintain the open lawn aspect to the south and to the west in order to integrate house and garden. The two sets of shallow steps, which suggest a change in levels from the carriageway to the western lawn, were never constructed.



Top left:
The Butler extension to Bishops court added in 1903
Photo: Nina Crone

Top right:
The foundation stone of the 1903 extension. The inscription translates 'Except the Lord build a house, they labour in vain that build it'
Photo: Nina Crone

Bottom right:
The eastern façade of Bishops court showing the red-brick chapel added in 1902
Photo: Robin Page



'Inskip and Butler: Sketch of Additions to Bishopscourt (1903)' from the *Building, Engineering & Mining Journal*, 13 October 1903

After these renovations Archbishop Lowther Clarke and his family lived at Bishopscourt from 1904 to 1920. Prior to the next Archbishop's appointment, it was reported that 'several hundred pounds will be expended in renovating the interior and making alterations to the grounds.'¹⁸ While the actual changes made to the garden are not documented, it is likely that they involved re-shaping and widening the serpentine carriageway to form a simplified, curved pathway around the main oval lawn. This also impacted on the paths within the formal garden south of the house by severing links with the driveway. These changes, necessary to accommodate the increase in motor vehicles, still exist today. Representing the first significant modification to the 19th century garden design, they maintained the original design intent of integrating the landscape with the design and siting of the house.¹⁹

In the 1960s the architects Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell undertook substantial renovations that included a two-storey extension to the rear of the house and a garage built on the northern boundary of the site, between the driveway and Gipps Street. Fortunately its siting did not impact on views across the garden from the house. The proposed construction of a 7ft high garden wall, to connect the garage to the house and create a private garden, never eventuated. Beryl Mann, a well-known landscape architect at the time, is reported as working on the planting around the new garage and advising on eucalypts that were shedding branches.²⁰

Prior to occupation by Archbishop Dann and his family in 1978, architects John and Phyllis Murphy, who had worked on the restoration of many National Trust properties, undertook some renovations to the house. At the time the Society of Clerical Gardeners proposed that the garden at Bishopscourt should be restored to its original form. However, this never occurred due to lack of information about the original garden design.²¹

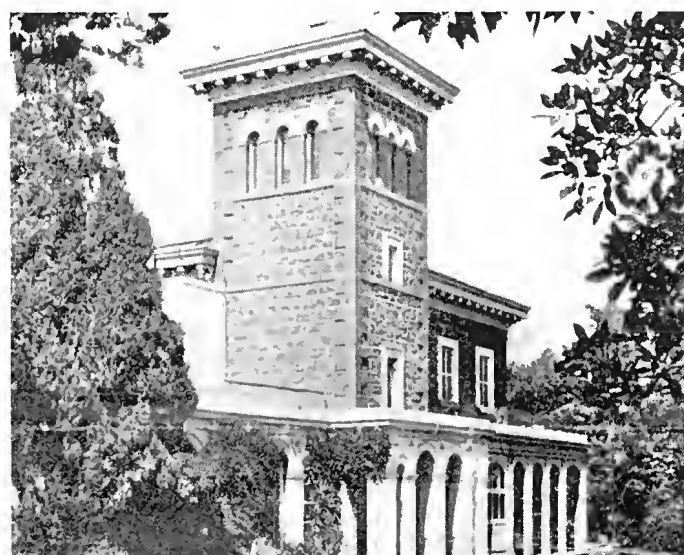
Garden Parties, Fêtes, Fairs and Receptions

From the time of Bishop Perry, the Bishopscourt garden has been used as more than a private family garden. It has often been a setting for garden parties, for occasional fund-raising, and for community events such as fêtes, carnivals and open days.

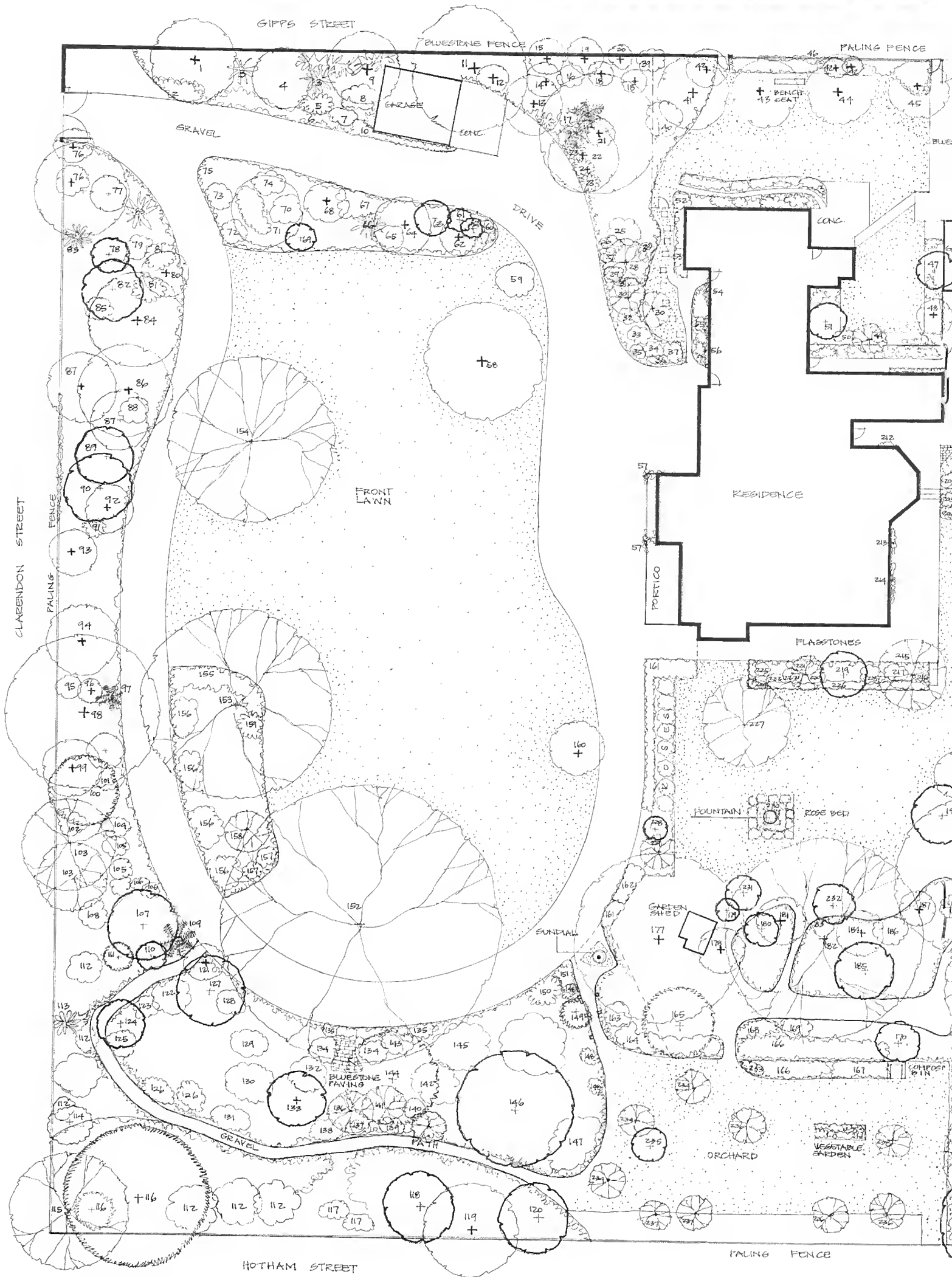
After the construction of the new red-brick wing, reports on garden parties became more common. Bishop Lowther Clark and his wife, who took up residency in 1904, are reported to have held many garden parties, as did his successor Archbishop Harrington Lees.

The tradition developed for garden parties to be held during Synod, on the first Thursday in October each year, when the garden was at its best. Marquees were set up on the lawn. Cups of tea, together with sandwiches and cakes, prepared earlier by willing helpers, were passed through the window of the small office located between the two drawing rooms. The day was an important social occasion, always reported in the press with detailed descriptions given of the new hats and outfits worn by the ladies.

A fête, complete with 'various stalls distributed throughout the grounds [and] other attractions in the form of motor-rides, side-shows and croquet',²² was held in the gardens in 1905 to raise funds for the Girls' Friendly Society. In May 1909 the *Weekly Times* carried photographs of a fair at Bishopscourt in aid of the House of Mercy at Cheltenham.²³

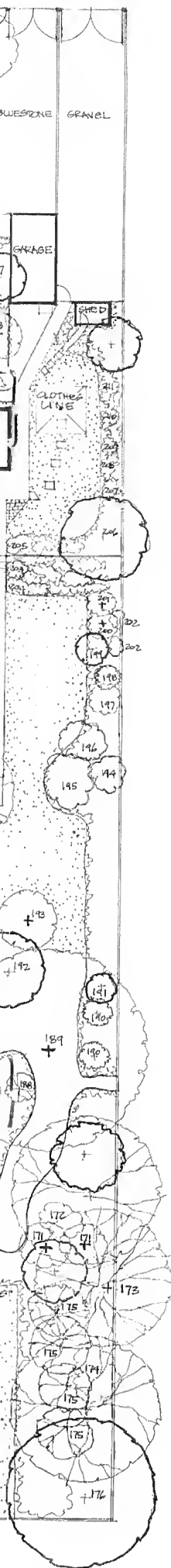


The original bluestone western façade of Bishopscourt
Photo courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives



BISHOPSCOURT PLANT LIST

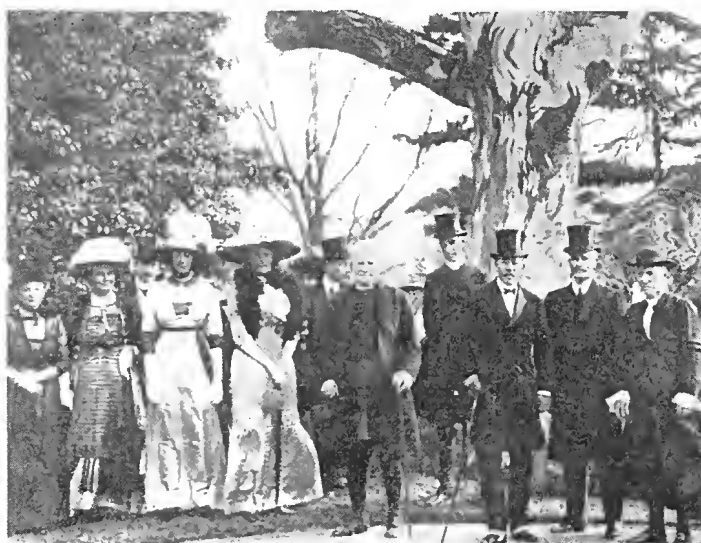
Compiled by John Hawker 7 August 2001



1. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
2. *Crassula ovata* (Silver Jade Plant)
3. *Cordyline stricta* (Slender Palm Lily)
4. *Nerium oleander* (Oleander)
5. *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise)
6. *Agapanthus praecox* subsp. *orientalis* (Blue Agapanthus)
7. *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*
8. *Chaenomeles speciosa* (Japanese Flowering Quince)
9. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
10. *Jasminum polyanthum* (Pink Jasmine)
11. *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak)
12. *Acmena smithii* (Lilly Pilly)
13. *Syzygium paniculatum* (Brush Cherry)
14. *Corymbia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Gum)
15. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
16. *Lochroma cyaneum* (2) (Violet Tube Flower)
17. *Ligustrum ovalifolium* (Californian Privet)
18. *Corymbia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Gum)
19. *Acmena smithii* (Lilly Pilly)
20. *Syzygium paniculatum* (Brush Cherry)
21. *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak)
22. *Melaleuca linariifolia* (Flaxleaf Paperbark)
23. *Strelitzia reginae* (3) (Bird of Paradise)
24. *Phormium tenax* (New Zealand Flax)
25. *Rhododendron* cv.
26. *Nandina domestica* (Japanese Sacred Bamboo)
27. *Buxus sempervirens* 'Angustifolia'
28. *Malus x purpurea* (Purple Crabapple)
29. *Chamaelium uncinatum* (Geraldton Waxflower)
30. *Betula pendula* (2) (Silver Birch)
31. *Euryops pectinatus* (Grey-leaved Euryops)
32. *Spiraea cantoniensis* 'Lanceata' (Double Spiraea)
33. *Thryptomene saxicola* 'F.C. Payne'
34. *Syringa vulgaris* (Lilac)
35. *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*
36. *Crassula ovata* (Silver Jade Plant)
37. *Thryptomene baeckekeae*
38. *Philodendron selloum*
39. *Jasminum humile* (Italian Jasmine)
40. *Acanthus mollis* (Oyster Plant)
41. *Melaleuca linariifolia* (Flaxleaf Paperbark)
42. *Agonis flexuosa* (2) (Willow Myrtle)
43. *Corymbia maculata* (Spotted Gum)
44. *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* (Red Ironbark)
45. *Agonis flexuosa* (Willow Myrtle)
46. *Wisteria sinensis* (Chinese Wisteria)
47. *Citrus x limon* cv. (Lemon)
48. *Callistemon citrinus* (Crimson Bottlebrush)
49. *Lagerstroemia indica* (Crepe Myrtle)
50. *Weigela florida*
51. *Citrus reticulata* (Mandarin)
52. *Protea* sp.
53. *Coprosma* 'Coppershine'
54. *Hardenbergia violacea* 'Happy Wanderer'
55. *Correa reflexa* (Native Fuchsia)
56. *Ficus pumila* (Creeping Fig)
57. *Wisteria sinensis* (2) (Chinese Wisteria)
58. *Eucalyptus melliodora* (Yellow Box)
59. *Chaenomeles speciosa* 'Nivalis'
60. *Cotinus coggygria* (Smoke Bush)
61. *Photinia serratifolia* (2) (Chinese Hawthorn)
62. *Acacia floribunda* (White Sallow Wattle)
63. *Pittosporum eugenioides* 'Variegatum' (Variegated Lemonwood)
64. *Acacia baileyana* (Cootamundra Wattle)
65. *Nerium oleander* (Oleander)
66. *Cordyline stricta* (Slender Palm Lily)
67. *Lantana camara* (Lantana)
68. *Eucalyptus polyanthemos* (Red Box)
69. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Purpureum' (Purple Kohuhu)
70. *Camellia japonica*
71. *Agapanthus praecox* subsp. *orientalis* (Blue Agapanthus)
72. *Spiraea cantoniensis* 'Lanceata' (Double Spiraea)
73. *Teucrium fruticans* (Bush Germander)
74. *Streptosolen jamesonii* (Marmalade Bush)
75. *Convolvulus sabatius* (Moroccan Glory Vine)
76. *Pittosporum undulatum* (2) (Sweet Pittosporum)
77. *Acca sellowiana* (Feijoa)
78. *Laurus nobilis* (Bay Laurel)
79. *Mackaya bella* (Natal Glory Bush)
80. *Eucalyptus botryoides* (Southern Mahogany)
81. *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise)
82. *Philadelphus mexicanus* (Mexican Mock Orange)
83. *Cordyline stricta* (Slender Palm Lily)
84. *Syzygium paniculatum* (Brush Cherry)
85. *Spiraea cantoniensis* 'Lanceata' (Double Spiraea)
86. *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak)
87. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
88. *Chaenomeles speciosa* (Japanese Flowering Quince)
89. *Photinia serratifolia* (Chinese Hawthorn)
90. *Buxus sempervirens* (English Box)
91. *Jasminum humile* (Italian Jasmine)
92. *Corymbia ficifolia* (Flowering Gum)
93. *Lophostemon confertus* (Queensland Box)
94. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
95. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
96. *Callistemon viminalis* (Weeping Bottlebrush)
97. *Trachycarpus fortunei* (Chinese Windmill Palm)
98. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum)
99. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
100. *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress)
101. *Viburnum tinus* (Laurustinus)
102. *Lochroma cyaneum* (Violet Tube Flower)
103. *Ulmus x hollandica* (2) (Dutch Elm)
104. *Buxus sempervirens* (2) (English Box)
105. *Genista monspessulana* (Broom)
106. *Buxus sempervirens* (English Box)
107. *Laurus nobilis* (Bay Laurel)
108. *Viburnum tinus* (Laurustinus)
109. *Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island Date Palm)
110. *Corynocarpus laevigatus* (Karaka)
111. *Calocedrus decurrens* (Incense Cedar)
112. *Euonymus japonica* (7) (Japanese Spindle Bush)
113. *Cordyline stricta* (Slender Palm Lily)
114. *Schinus areira* (Pepper Tree)
115. *Populus x canadensis* 'Aurea' (Golden Poplar)
116. *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress)
117. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
118. *Macadamia tetraphylla* (Macadamia Nut)
119. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
120. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (Kohuhu)
121. *Syzygium paniculatum* (Brush Cherry)
122. *Nerium oleander* (Oleander)
123. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Bush)
124. *Arbutus unedo* (Irish Strawberry Tree)
125. *Viburnum tinus* (Laurustinus)
126. *Jasminum humile* (2) (Italian Jasmine)
127. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
128. *Philadelphus coronarius* (Mock Orange)
129. *Spiraea cantoniensis* 'Lanceata' (Double Spiraea)
130. *Ilex aff. kingiana*
131. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Bush)
132. *Ligustrum ovalifolium* (Californian Privet)
133. *Photinia serratifolia* (Chinese Hawthorn)
134. *Nerium oleander* (2) (Oleander)
135. *Salvia greggii* (Autumn Sage)
136. *Punica granatum* (Pomegranate)
137. *Ligustrum vulgare* (Privet)
138. *Ligustrum ovalifolium* (Californian Privet)
139. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
140. *Ligustrum lucidum* 'Tricolor'
141. *Fraxinus ornus* (Flowering Ash)
142. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
143. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Bush)
144. *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress)
145. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Bush)
146. *Photinia serratifolia* (Chinese Hawthorn)
147. *Plumbago auriculata* (Cape Leadwort)
148. *Crinum moorei* (4) (Moore's Crinum)
149. *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Fastigiata' (Fastigate Monterey Cypress)
150. *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise)
151. *Bougainvillea glabra* (Bougainvillea)
152. *Ulmus procera* (English Elm)
153. *Ulmus procera* (English Elm)
154. *Ulmus procera* (English Elm)
155. *Agapanthus praecox* subsp. *orientalis* (Blue Agapanthus)
156. *Viburnum tinus* (4) (Laurustinus)
157. *Rosmarinus officinalis* (Rosemary)
158. *Prunus cerasifera* (Cherry Plum)
159. *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise)
160. *Corymbia ficifolia* (Flowering Gum)
161. *Escallonia rubra* var. *macrantha*
162. *Lonicera fragrantissima* (Winter Honeysuckle)
163. *Euonymus japonica* (Japanese Spindle Tree)

Continued overleaf

164. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
165. *Cupressus sempervirens* (Italian Cypress)
166. *Tecomaria capensis* (Cape Honeysuckle)
167. *Hedra helix* (English Ivy)
168. *Jasminum humile* (Italian Jasmine)
169. *Abelia x grandiflora* (Glossy Abelia)
170. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (Kohuhu)
171. *Pittosporum undulatum* (2) (Sweet Pittosporum)
172. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
173. *Ulmus x hollandica* (Dutch Elm)
174. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
175. *Ulmus x hollandica* (4) (Dutch Elm)
176. *Schinus areira* (Pepper Tree)
177. *Ficus rubiginosa* (Port Jackson Fig)
178. *Lophostemon confertus* (Queensland Box)
179. *Citrus* cv.
180. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (Kohuhu)
181. *Acmena smithii* (Lilly Pilly)
182. *Ulmus x hollandica* (Dutch Elm)
183. *Rosmarinus officinalis* (Rosemary)
184. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
185. *Eriobotrya japonica* (Loquat)
186. *Camellia japonica*
187. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
188. *Acer palmatum* (Japanese Maple)
189. *Corymbia maculata* (Spotted Gum)
190. *Cupressus sempervirens* (Italian Cypress)
191. *Magnolia grandiflora* (Southern Magnolia)
192. *Sophora microphylla* (Kowhai)
193. *Agonis flexuosa* (Willow Myrtle)
194. *Omalanthus populifolius* (Bleeding Heart Tree)
195. *Cotoneaster glaucophyllus* f. *serotinus* (Late Cotoneaster)
196. *Nerium oleander* (Oleander)
197. *Westringia fruticosa* (Coast Rosemary)
198. *x Cupressocyparis leylandii* (Leyland Cypress)
199. *Citrus* 'Meyer' (Meyer Lemon)
200. *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum)
201. *Callistemon citrinus* (Crimson Bottlebrush)
202. *Abelia x grandiflora* (Glossy Abelia)
203. *Daphne odora* (Daphne)
204. *Gardenia jasminoides* (Gardenia)
205. *Rosmarinus officinalis* (Rosemary)
206. *Eriobotrya japonica* (Loquat)
207. *Choisya ternata* (Mexican Orange)
208. *Viburnum opulus* 'Sterile' (Snowball Tree)
209. *Viburnum odorantissimum* (Sweet Viburnum)
210. *Kolkwitzia amabilis* (Chinese Beauty Bush)
211. *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush)
212. *Euphorbia pulcherrima* (Poinsettia)
213. *Rosa* cv. (Rose)
214. *Hardenbergia violacea* 'Happy Wanderer'
215. *Cydonia oblonga* (Quince)
216. *Nandina domestica* (Japanese Sacred Bamboo)
217. *Camellia sasanqua*
218. *Camellia japonica*
219. *Persea americana* (Avocado)
220. *Magnolia liliiflora* 'Nigra'
221. *Rhododendron* cv.
222. *Abelia x grandiflora* (Glossy Abelia)
223. *Rhododendron* cv.
224. *Forsythia viridissima* (Forsythia)
225. *Viburnum x carlcephalum* (Fragrant Viburnum)
226. *Buxus sempervirens* (English Box)
227. *Prunus* cv. (sato-zakura group) (Japanese Cherry)
228. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (Kohuhu)
229. *Pyrus communis* (Pear)
230. *Buxus sempervirens* (English Box)
231. *Citrus x limon* (Lemon)
232. *Citrus x aurantium* cv. (Grapefruit)
233. *Rosmarinus officinalis* (Rosemary)
234. *Ficus carica* (3) (Fig)
235. *Citrus x aurantium* cv. (Grapefruit)
236. *Prunus* cv. (Peach)
237. *Malus* cv. (Apple)
238. *Prunus* 'Trevatt' (Apricot)
239. *Laurus nobilis* (Bay Laurel)



Guests at the Garden Party at Bishops court in October 1912
Photo: The Australasian, 12 October 1912, courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives

More than 1,000 guests, representing 'every phase of church and civic life', attended the garden party in 1939 with 'the spacious grounds... with their old, white gums, spreading elm trees and green, sloping lawns' providing the backdrop.²⁴ In 1951, at the garden party held by Archbishop Booth, it was reported that the crowd was so large that there was a queue from the Bishops court gates almost as far as Wellington Parade to get in.²⁵

Archbishop Woods' first garden party, on 3 October 1958, attracted a crowd of 1,500 people including parliamentary and civic representatives, heads of services and the clergy of the Diocese. The press reported that:

*The somewhat unusually summery, garden-party weather (so often it had rained for this event), the sloping green lawns and the first trails of wisteria curving around the lovely old bluestone set the atmosphere for the afternoon. A slim-skirted frock and matching jacket of light black wool was worn by Mrs Woods and she added a small cap composed of white faille leaves and a spray of white camellias.*²⁶

A regular visitor to Bishops court during the residency of the Woods family recalls a large garden reception, organised by the Mothers' Union in the early 1960s, in honour of a visit from England by the Central President, Susan Varah.²⁷ It was preceded by a service at St Paul's Cathedral, filled to capacity. Trams were chartered to bring the ladies to Clarendon Street, while at Bishops court marquees had been set up on the lawn and the tea and sandwiches were prepared in the neighbouring Deanery. The event is still talked about today.

The last garden party was held in the late 1960s when concern was expressed that the money could be better used to help those in need. This view was reinforced following a resolution at the 1968 Lambeth Conference (the meeting of the world's Anglican bishops) that bishops should live 'in a style closer to the ordinary conditions of the people' rather than in large houses with vast gardens.²⁸ Thereafter, the use of the garden at Bishops court for entertaining and fund-raising dwindled.

Personal Contributions to the Garden

With each Archbishop and his family able to maintain the Bishops court garden according to their own tastes, abilities and available funds, there are very few records of gardening activity.



Path in the 'wilderness garden' on the south-western corner of the property in 2001
Photo: Robin Page



Border planting along the carriage drive at Bishops court in 2001
Photo: Robin Page



Iris in the 'wilderness garden'
Photo: Robin Page

The residing family usually employed a 'gardener' but, as he was also expected to do the handyman jobs that were numerous due to the age of the house, time spent on the garden was minimal.

Archbishop Woods and his wife, who knew all the botanical names of plants, were both keen gardeners. They lived at Bishops court for 20 years (1957-1977) making them the longest residents after Bishop Perry. They made several changes to the garden. Keen to get more family use from the southern garden, they erected a trellis and planted a hedge of *Escallonia rubra* var. *macrantha* along the western boundary to screen it from the adjacent driveway, providing privacy from the street and from the numerous visitors to Bishops court. Mrs Woods planted several native trees on the eastern boundary of the southern garden. The family called this planting 'the Deanery Screenery'. At this time the fence around the perimeter of the property was made of wire strands so permission was sought to erect a timber-paling fence to keep out the undesirable characters who frequently wandered into the garden.

The Woods family also made use of the main lawn on the long summer evenings by erecting a tennis net and marking out court lines. The Archbishop, a keen sportsman, would sometimes hit a hockey ball around this area with his daughters, or set up croquet hoops on the southern lawn.

Archbishop Woods' love of figs resulted in several of these trees being planted in the orchard, along with cumquats and quinces. The vegetable garden is also remembered to have had sweet corn taller than the fence, and wonderful scarecrows.²⁹

Archbishop Dann found his relaxation in the vegetable and flower garden, promising his wife, when they moved into Bishops court, that he would provide her with flowers.³⁰ He was also reported

responsible for several of the new plantings, and for removing some of the eucalypts planted by previous owners as he thought them inappropriate to the formal design of the garden.³¹ Archbishop Penman, who took up residency in 1984, relocated the bench from the main western lawn to the private garden south of the house. His wife planted a vegetable garden behind the hedge bordering the southern garden.³²

Several of the archbishops consulted tree surgeons in relation to the Corroboree Tree that had been suffering from a degenerative disease for many years. During Archbishop Woods' residency, when one of the tree's main horizontal branches on the northern side eventually succumbed to gravity, it was left on the ground for many years, becoming covered in ivy and making quite a decorative feature.³³ Classified by the National Trust as a significant tree, due to its age and history, the Corroboree Tree did not survive. It had to be removed in the late 1990s by Archbishop Rayner.

The Garden Today

The garden today is still divided into several areas of both open and closed spaces. The front lawn enclosed by the driveway to the west of the house maintains the original sense of space. Due to the loss of the Corroboree Tree that dominated the eastern side of the lawn, this space is now even greater than originally designed. The only plantings retained are to the north of the lawn, on both sides of the driveway and adjacent of the garage. They help to screen out the neighbouring hospital. There is also a bed of shrubs on the south-western section of the lawn around a large *Ulmus procera* (English Elm).

The western bed, between the driveway and the fence running along Clarendon Street, contains many mature trees such as *Lophostemon confertus* (Brush Box), *Photinia serrulata* (Chinese Hawthorn) and *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress).



Looking across the southern garden with its paved terrace and escallonia hedge, 2001

Photo: Robin Page

However, it has become dominated by many 'weedy' species such as *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum), *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush), *Hedera helix* (Common Ivy) and *Agapanthus praecox* ssp. *orientalis* (Agapanthus). Of interest is an excellent specimen of the relatively uncommon *Jasminum humile* (Italian Yellow Jasmine) which is also found in the northern and southern beds.

The formal garden, south of the house, remains an enclosed lawn with a central fountain. The hedge of *Escallonia rubra* var. *macrantha* screens off the main garden to the west. The house and a long mixed border screen the north, while the eastern boundary is planted with a mix of exotic and native trees. To the south, a number of mature trees standing in remnant beds, together with a hedge of *Coprosma repens* (Mirror Bush) and *Tecomaria capensis* (Cape Fire-Flower), provide a dense screen.

Behind the southern hedge are the old vegetable garden and orchard containing a few mixed fruit trees. Adjacent to the 'wilderness' that runs east along Hotham Street from the Clarendon Street corner, this wild area maintains the original design intent and is a marked contrast to the rest of the garden. Today it contains mature trees and 'weedy' species similar to the western driveway bed. A path runs from the south-western driveway loop to the south-eastern corner where there are the remains of an old timber pergola and the original sundial.

Maintenance

The costs associated with maintaining the large garden at Bishops court have always been an issue. Up until the 1940s, the archbishop's wife managed garden maintenance and the associated costs came out of the archbishop's stipend. After that time the stipend was found to be insufficient to include such costs, so the Diocesan Office became involved. Additional money for the garden has always been difficult to find in the face of other concerns such as the funding and founding of new parishes in the growth corridors of metropolitan Melbourne.

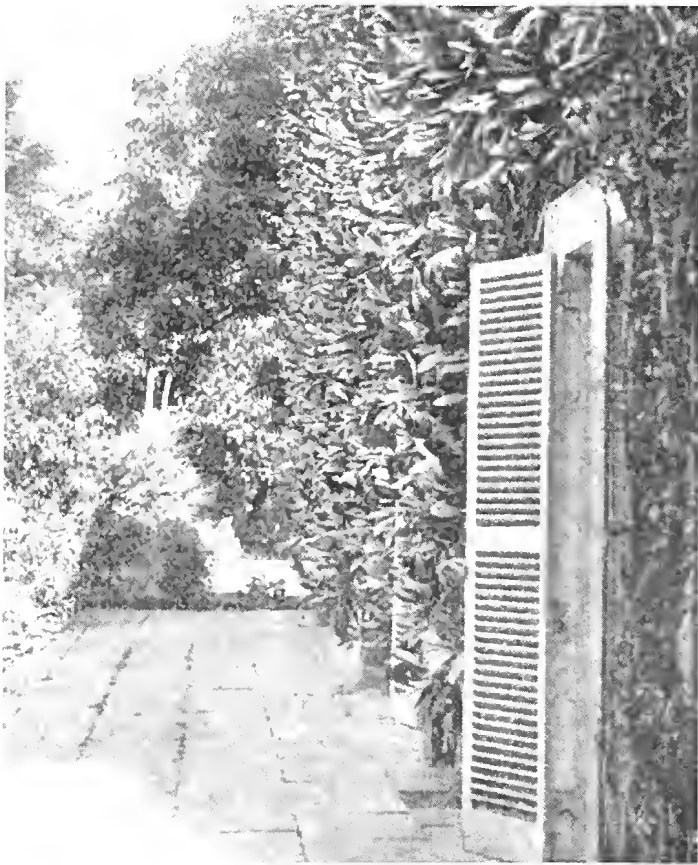
This lack of funding, and the archbishop's limited time, due to work commitments, have meant that the garden has never enjoyed a high priority, even with those archbishops who were keen gardeners. This fact largely accounts for the few changes to the garden over the years. In recent time, garden maintenance has focused on a tidy appearance rather than nurturing existing plants or attempting to maintain any original design intent.

The Future

The importance of Bishops court is reflected in its heritage listings. Heritage Victoria has listed both the house and garden. The National Trust classified the original bluestone building but excluded the 1903 brick wing and the garden. The Australian Heritage Commission includes both the original bluestone building and the 1903 brick wing on the Register of the National Estate, but excludes the garden.

The garden at Bishops court is considered of social significance as it has been the venue for official hospitality, garden parties, fêtes, and carnivals over many years. It also has landscape and scientific significance due to its collection of mature plants. Eighteen trees are noted on the Victorian Heritage Register with the *Ficus rubiginosa* (Port Jackson Fig) and the *Ilex f. kingiana* (Holly), both located in the southern section of the site, considered to be of scientific significance. The latter specimen is in very poor condition. Other trees considered significant are those characteristic of 19th century planting such as the large *Ulmus x hollandica* (Dutch Elm), several *U. procera* (English Elm), a *Schinus molle* (Peppercorn) and some *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak).

Throughout its history the location and size of Bishops court have made it an attractive re-development proposal. In 1874 the Governor of Victoria granted the right of disposition of the property permitting the Bishop to sell all or part of the property as he determined, providing the proceeds were



Terrace in front of original dining room window, showing magnolia
Photo: The Australasian, 4 October 1902, courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives

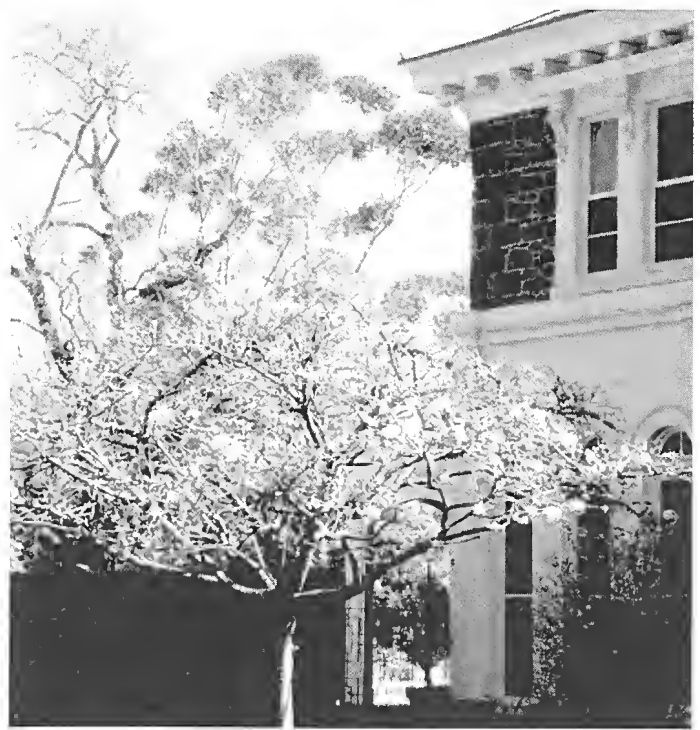
invested appropriately. There have been several attempts to dispose of the property. The first was in 1903 when the possibility of demolishing the mansion and building new houses on the site, as a means of raising revenue for the Church, was considered. Other development proposals arose in the 1960s and early 1970s, but parishioner and community opposition defeated them. Then in 1998, a proposal to subdivide the Hotham Street frontage was the subject of a permit application before Heritage Victoria. The application was refused.³⁴

Much work is needed to preserve the garden. The Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society has proposed the following program for the garden to be overseen by the Society

- The preparation of a Management Plan
- Working bees to be conducted on the 3rd Wednesday of every second month beginning on 18 July 2001
- The inclusion of the garden in the 2002/2003 program of the Australian Open Garden Scheme with proceeds from gate receipts being put back into the garden
- Appropriate applications for grant funding to be made

The Australian Garden History Society has sought support from members of the East Melbourne Garden Club, the East Melbourne Group, and the East Melbourne Historical Society in preserving this important 19th century Australian garden.

Wendy Dwyer is completing the Graduate Diploma in Applied Science (Horticulture) from the University of Melbourne. She has an interest in researching historic gardens and cultural landscapes.



Japanese cherry in southern garden, spring 2001
Photo: Robin Page



Unidentified rose, spring 2001
Photo: Robin Page



Southern Garden showing paved terrace, fountain and Corroboree Tree.
Photo: Courtesy Melbourne Diocesan Archives



Japanese cherry and escallonia hedge in southern garden, 2001
Photo: Robin Page



In the 'wilderness', 2001
Photo: Robin Page

- 1 Meredith Gould Architects Pty Ltd, *Bishops court: A Report to the Heritage Council on the Proposal for a 4-Lot Subdivision*, Melbourne, 4 April 2000, p. 1.
- 2 From the Reverend George Goodman's diary, quoted in *The Church of England Messenger*, 1 October, 1903.
- 3 Allom Lovell & Associates, *Bishops court Garden*, January 1999, p. 7.
- 4 *ibid.* pp. 7-8
- 5 Charles Perry, Testimonial for Charles Swyer, 4 February, 1862. Collection of Joan Glover, Camberwell, (great grand-daughter of Charles Swyer) Copy held in Diocesan Archives.
- 6 Letter, Charles Swyer to Bishop Perry, 11 December, 1854. Collection of Joan Glover, Camberwell, Cited in Allom Lovell & Associates *Bishops court Garden*, January 1999, p. 9.
- 7 *ibid.* p. 9
- 8 Letterbook of Charles Swyer, p. 288. Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.
- 9 Gould, op. cit. pp.5-6
- 10 James Sinclair, *The Beauties of Victoria 1856*, quoted in John Foster, 'Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne: Their Evolution – and a Plea for Sympathetic Policy for Their Preservation.' *Landscape Australia*, 2 (May 1984) p. 83
- 11 Gould, op. cit. p.5
- 12 Gould, op. cit. p.3
- 13 'Bishops court: a Residence Full of Charm and Surprises' Adam and Eve, 1 July 1926, p.42. cited Allom Lovell op.cit. p.28
- 14 'Bishops court', *The Australasian*, 4 October 1902, p.807
- 15 *ibid.* p.807
- 16 Ruth Sanderson, 'Walter Richmond Butler – Architect and Landscape Designer', *Landscape Australia* 3 (1990), p.330
- 17 Bishop's Court, Melbourne', *Building, Mining & Engineering Journal*, vol. XXII, no. 872, 13 October, 1903, p.258
- 18 'Anglican Archbishopric: Renovations at Bishops court'. *The Argus*, 3 August 1921, p.8
- 19 Gould, op. cit. p.6
- 20 Allom Lovell, op. cit. p.11
- 21 Letter, the Reverend Stephen R. Cherry to Mrs Swyer, 13 December [1977], Collection of Joan Glover.
- 22 'Fête at Bishops court', *The Weekly Times*, 6 May 1905, p.18
- 23 'Fair at Bishops court', *The Weekly Times*, 1 May 1909, p. 27
- 24 'Garden Party Held at Bishops court', *The Argus*, 13 October 1939, p. 8
- 25 'For 45 Minutes – Guests Came and Came', *The Argus*, 5 October 1951, p.3
- 26 'Garden Party at Bishops court', *The Age*, 3 October 1958, p.8
- 27 Personal communication with Mrs Mary Britten
- 28 Bruce Best, 'Elegance where a Bishop holds Court', *The Age*, 19 August 1980, p.17
- 29 Personal communication. David Woods and Richenda Harrison, children of Archbishop Woods
- 30 Bruce Best, op. cit., p.17
- 31 Allom Lovell, op. cit., p.12
- 32 Allom Lovell, op. cit., p.13
- 33 Personal communication with Mrs Mary Britten
- 34 *ibid.* p.13

Acknowledgments:

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Text:	Wendy Dwyer
Plant List:	John Hawker, 'Heritage Victoria'
Garden Plan:	Elizabeth Peck, Landscape Architect
Photographs:	Robin Page
	Margo Watson
	Nina Crone
	Melbourne Diocesan Records

The production of this article has been subsidised by the Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society. The AGHS was formed in 1980 to bring together people with an interest in the various aspects of garden history, and to promote research into historic gardens. Information about the Society may be obtained from Jackie Courmadias on (03) 9650 5043 or 1800 678 446.



Garden party talk,
October 1912

Photo: *The Australasian*,
12 October 1912, courtesy
Melbourne Diocesan
Archives

Fabulous Ferneries

By Ken Duxbury



John Raddenbury in the latticework fernery at Geelong Botanic Gardens
Photo: Courtesy Geelong Botanic Garden Archives

Continuing his survey of Victoria's 19th century ferneries, Ken Duxbury describes the magnificent structures that epitomised the opulence of the 1880s.

Timber Latticework Ferneries

These structures were built in a large number of Victoria's botanical gardens, and to a lesser extent, in ornamental public gardens. Some private gardens, notably Rippon Lea in Melbourne and Belmont near Beaufort, also featured a latticework fernery.

The structures varied greatly in size, shape, style and grandeur. They were mainly built in the late 1870s and 1880s and were generally constructed entirely in timber, sometimes painted and sometimes left bare. They often included elaborate cast iron or "carpenter's gothic" ornamentation. The purpose of the structures was to shade the ferns from the hot summer sun, and also, most importantly, to protect them from wind.

Similar in scale and proportion to the glasshouses and conservatories used to grow tree ferns and other delicate ferns in the colder climates of England and Europe, the antipodean latticework fernery was much cheaper to construct and maintain, and therefore probably tended to be larger.

The Great Public Ferneries: Ballarat and Geelong

The spectacularly large, impressive and world-renowned fernery at Ballarat Botanic Gardens was built in the late 1880s. It was of Victorian Gothic style, with elaborate cast iron and wooden fretwork ornamentation creating an appearance more like a cathedral than a shed. Most of this fernery was demolished in the 1940s, but part of it has been reconstructed on a much smaller scale, and with treated pine framework, giving a much more utilitarian and less memorable appearance.

A broad gravel walk led up the middle of the grounds, with lateral paths all daintily kept. Dark shadowy labyrinths conducted us into cool grottoes overhung with tree-ferns,



The Geelong Fernery in the Botanic Gardens at Eastern Park, in 1880s
Photo: Courtesy Geelong Botanic Garden Archives

where young lovers could whisper undisturbed, and those who were not lovers could read novels.¹

As Froude visited the fernery on a summer afternoon when the temperature was 103° F in the shade, after visiting a gold mine and its foundries in the morning, the fernery must indeed have been a welcome relief. He emphasised the way in which gold contributed to the prosperity and almost overblown grandeur of Ballarat.

I have already expressed my admiration of Australian gardens, but this [one] at Ballarat excelled them all. It was as if the town council had decided to show what gold and science could do with such a soil and climate.

The very large fernery at Geelong Botanic Gardens, built in the 1880s, was similar in shape to, and may have been modelled on, the famous Palm House in Kew Gardens, London. The exterior had a rather rusticated appearance and parts of the façade appear to have been decorated with some type of bark. The fernery also included some wooden and cast iron ornamentation characteristic of Victorian style, but applied much more sparingly than at Ballarat. It was built in three sections, from 1885 onwards. It was conceived and probably designed by John Raddenbury, curator of the Geelong gardens from 1872 until 1896

The enclosure is made of hardwood palings, placed at sufficient distance apart to admit of light and air. The front has an arched centre, with two wings in pointed or Gothic style. It is painted white, and the eaves are surmounted by a cast-iron border which gives an agreeable finish to the structure.²

The second stage took the form of a transept octagon and was endorsed by the Gardens Committee on 10 March 1886. The *Geelong Advertiser* of 2 December 1886 contained a detailed description of the interior and planting in the new fernery. It reported that

...the design, which forms a semi-circle with an octagon in the centre of what eventually will be the whole length of the building, is a particularly pleasing one, viewed from various parts of the



The latticework fernery at Belmont, near Beaufort, Victoria c. 1880
Photo: Courtesy Mrs Jocelyn Reid



The elaborate latticework fernery in the Ballarat Botanic Gardens
Photo: One of a stereoscopic pair of photos from the Ken Duxbury Postcard Collection, courtesy Ken Duxbury

park, but the interior is a picture of grandeur, the equal of which, so far as art is concerned, does not exist in the colonies. The fernery is situated in the centre of the nursery [i.e. the Botanic Gardens as distinct from Eastern Park] and extends a length of 60 feet, but it is to be extended next year to add 80 feet to the length of the building so that the remarkably pretty Octagon will stand in the centre, 150 feet each way.

The report then describes the plantings including various tree-ferns, todeas, and other ferns, and creeping plants – *Cobaea scandens*, *Tacsonia eriantha* and *T. van volxemii* – and 'Cloth of Gold' roses, cannas, a *Jubea spectabilis* [*J. chilensis*] palm, pre-existing Kentias and Phoenix palms. After walking through the fernery and passing various features such as miniature pools, visitors arrived at the Octagon.

The inner circle... is 60 feet in circumference, and it attains a height of 60 feet. In the centre of it there is a large pool having four bays and four recesses. The pool contains water-lilies, and is surrounded by a well-constructed rockery, relieved by ferns and foliage plants. The inner line of the octagon is formed by twelve tree-ferns, 20 feet in height, the gift of Mr R.V. Dennis, of Irrewarre [near Colac] the outer line being formed by the supports of the roof.

At the centre of the pond there stood a Jupiter Fluvius fountain throwing out fire jets of water. It was mounted on a 16 foot high pillar built of "whirls of rugged rocks" [local limestone] on a concrete foundation. It was noted that "In every nook and cranny of the gigantic pillar, mosses and ferns have been planted."

The section of the fernery to the east of the octagon was described as containing palms, ferns, camellias, 16 varieties of holly, a large flame tree (*Sterculia acerifolia*), "two and three headed tree ferns from Gippsland" and in addition "... each bed is surrounded by double rows of rock stones, from which ferns etc. peep out in a most enticing manner."

The sides of the fernery were planted with ivy-leaved geraniums "... and at every post there is a fuchsia. Creepers are also planted, and the borders contain a profuse display of camellias, rhododendrons, azaleas, and many choice decorative plants."

The beds on the north and south sides of the fernery were planted with rows of *Dicksonia* tree ferns – numbering 48 altogether – and overhanging the side footpaths were bamboo cane baskets filled with moss and ferns, whilst placed in conspicuous positions were "100 handsome specimens of Staghorn ferns."

The fernery fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1945 and 1957. A new, open-air fernery was constructed in the Geelong Botanic Gardens in the 1980s.

Other Public Gardens

At Daylesford Botanic Gardens there was a latticework structure (now gone). It contained a variety of ferns, but was in some ways more like a conservatory with hydrangeas, small palms, and various foliage plants. This style of planting may have been partly due to the fact that Daylesford Botanic Gardens had a separate outdoor fernery area.

In brief, most self-respecting gardens in Victoria had a latticework fernery as the following summary testifies.

- A large fernery at Creswick Botanic Gardens consisting of a 'split level' structure built into the side of a hill, overlooking the lake but few vestiges of it remain today.
- A large, but not grand, fernery at Hamilton Botanic Gardens (now gone).
- A simple latticework fernery at the Town Hall Gardens at Ballarat East (now gone).
- A small, almost domestic scale fernery at Maryborough Botanic Gardens
- A small latticework fernery presently exists at Warrnambool Botanic Gardens, displaying ferns indigenous to the Otway Ranges. It appears to be of relatively recent construction, but may have replaced an earlier structure.

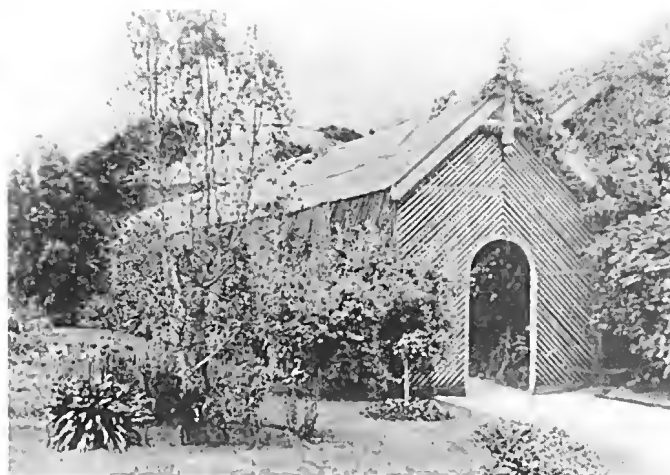
Two Private Latticework Ferneries

Belmont was first developed in about 1858 by J.F. Watkin, an engineering contractor to a Ballarat gold-mining company. He loved the land, and later he was to try his hand at vine growing, fruit growing and the nursery business. During the 1860s the property was a popular pleasure garden and eventually an impressive latticework fernery was built. Although the exact date of construction is not recorded, in 1896 a local paper wrote of its interior as 'a perfect bower of wide-spreading fronds [which] delight the eye and charm the senses.'³

It has been stated that the fernery at Rippon Lea is 'possibly the greatest fernery ever created in a private garden'. Built in the 1870s it covered a vast area and was slightly sunken into the ground thus providing changes in level. The fact that wrought iron arches, supported on a double aisle of cast iron



The lattice-work fernery in the Botanical Gardens, Creswick
Photo: From the Ken Duxbury Postcard Collection, courtesy Ken Duxbury



Part of fernery in the Geelong Botanic Gardens
Photo: Courtesy Geelong Botanic Garden Archives

pillars, provided the skeleton of the structure ensured that this fernery survived sufficiently for the later renewal of the wooden lathes.

The Disappearance of the Lattice-work Ferneries

Most of the lattice-work ferneries appear to have been demolished by the 1950s. This was probably because the timber latticework – and to a lesser extent the timber framework – had a limited natural lifespan, and extensive repairs would have been required after 50 to 70 years.

The natural processes of decay, accelerated by the moist interiors of the ferneries, and also by the actions of climbing plants and by palms and other tall-growing plants reaching and thrusting through the latticework hastened the destruction. By the time extensive repairs were required, ferneries had ceased to be fashionable. Moreover capital and material resources were limited because of the 1930s depression, World War II, and the post-war building boom when it was very difficult to obtain timber for houses, let alone something as frivolous and inessential as restoring an old fernery.

Fortunately, the restoration of the great fernery at Rippon Lea enables visitors to experience the romantic, cool magic of one of last century's fabulous ferneries.

- 1 J.A. Froude, *Oceana*, (New Edition 1886) p.113
- 2 *Geelong Advertiser* 1884 quoted G. Jones *Growing Together*, 1984 p. 82
- 3 *Ararat Chronicle*, 31 July 1896

Ken Duxbury has a Master of Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Melbourne. He has worked in urban and environmental planning and as a consultant on historic gardens and public parks. In the next issue of the journal he will consider the planting and garden design in Victorian ferneries.

Diary Dates

JANUARY 2002

Until 17 February

Victoria, Mornington, **Arthur Streeton: the passionate gardener** An exhibition of Streeton's flower paintings at the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Dunns Road, Mornington, 10am to 5pm Tues. to Sun. (closed Mon.) Admission (includes GST) \$3.30 Adults, \$1.65 Students & Concession

16 Wednesday

Victoria, Melbourne, **Working Bee – Bishopton** Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

27 Sunday

Victoria, Castlemaine, **Working Bee – Buda** Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

FEBRUARY

7 Thursday

Victoria, Melbourne, **Walk & Talk at Bishopton** Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

15 Friday

ACT/Monaro/Riverina, 5 pm **Reid Ramble** led by Shibu Datta. Contact: Max Bourke (02) 6247 4630

23 Saturday

Victoria, Churchill Island, **Working Bee** then see the new visitor centre and stay for the jazz entertainment.
Nina Crone (03) 5663 2381

ADVANCE NOTICES

4-6 October 2002 in Hobart

AGHS - 23rd Annual National Conference
'Gardens of the Imagination'

MARCH

3 Sunday

Victoria, Woodend - 11am to 5 pm
Open Garden Day at Flint Hill (20 Old Lancefield Road, Woodend) Admission: Adults \$8 in aid of Help to Hear & Bionic Ear Institute. Further details from Virginia Simpson on (03) 9283 7507

10 Sunday

Western Australia, Perth, **Talk by Rika Ericson** at the Historic Society Headquarters in 'The Old Observatory'. Contact Linda Green (08) 9335 5906

2003

11-13 July in Brisbane

AGHS - 24th Annual National Conference

Items Of Interest

Open day at Flint Hill, Woodend

Sunday, 3 March 2002

Those who visited Flint Hill during the 1994 Annual Conference may like to renew acquaintance with its wonderful collection of trees: 'the constant joy' of owner Lady Carmen Carnegie. For those who do not know the garden, here is a splendid opportunity to discover the magic of the pond garden or to appreciate the adzed post-and-rail fence which ties the garden into the wider landscape. Rose enthusiasts will head for the rose garden where rugosas, complicatas and David Austin strains cope with the rigours of the 600m altitude. The late Joan Law-Smith described Flint Hill as 'majestic due to the nobility of the magnificent trees' and if it is an early autumn next year, their splendour will be inspiring. Those wishing to read more about the garden will find Lady Law-Smith's article in *Australian Garden History* Volume 6, Number 1, July/August 1994 pp. 5-8.

A New AGHS Publication - Call for Papers

The Australian Garden History Society intends to publish a series of fully refereed occasional papers on issues relating to the history and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and gardens.

The series will be edited by Max Bourke and funded by the AGHS. Max was the founding CEO of the Australian Heritage Commission, CEO of the Australia Council, and the Australasian editor of the *International Journal of Garden History*. He has an academic background in plant sciences and gardening history.

The publication (working title: 'Studies in Australian Garden History') will provide a forum for research into a wide variety of topics relevant to the history of gardens and cultural landscapes. No theme has been nominated for the first issue, but it is anticipated that the emphasis will be on Australia. Contributions will be drawn from a range of disciplines, including geography, landscape architecture, history, literature, art history, archaeology, horticulture and heritage studies.

Word limit: 5000 words
Deadline for abstracts: April 2002
Deadline for final papers: September 2002
Intended publication date: July 2003
For further information contact:
Max Bourke email: mebourke@ozemail.com.au
Colleen Morris email: morris@zeta.org.au

Postponement of English Garden Tour

In view of the present uncertain situation in the travel industry, the English Garden History Society decided to postpone the tour scheduled for May 2002. It is now planned for 2003.

Election Results

National Management Committee

Following the election at the Annual General Meeting in Melbourne in October 2001, and the subsequent election of the executive members of the National Management Committee, the following people will manage AGHS affairs for the period 2001-2002:

Chairman: Peter Watts
Vice-Chairman: Richard Heathcote
Treasurer: Elizabeth Walker
Secretary: Helen Page

Elected Representatives:

Max Bourke
Richard Heathcote
Colleen Morris
Stuart Read
Elizabeth Walker
Peter Watts
Dianne Wilkins
Malcolm Wilson

State Representatives:

ACT Gabrielle Tryon
NSW James Hoskins
Qld Glenn Cooke
SA Miriam Hansman
Tas. Deidre Pearson
Vic. Helen Page
WA Anne Willox

Thanks

Thanks to Beryl Black, Jane Bunney, Nina Crone, Jane Johnson, John and Beverley Joyce, Laura Lewis, Ann Miller, Helen Page, Sandra Pullman and Ann Rayment for packing the last issue of the journal.

National Conference in Hobart October 2002 GARDENS OF THE IMAGINATION Call for Papers

Gardens have always contained within themselves an element of artistic expression. This expression can manifest itself in numerous ways. It may be obvious, or it may be more subtle and almost indiscernible. Representations of gardens by artists and crafts-people add an extra dimension to the original artistic concept. This can lead to interesting juxtapositions of ideas as well as expounding original thought.

Expressions of interest in presenting papers are being sought from a wide range of potential speakers who are encouraged to send a brief description of their topic to the

Conference Secretary:

Stephen Cousens, 'Milton'

29 McKellar Street, SOUTH HOBART, Tasmania 7004

Tel/Fax: (03) 6224 6105 **E-mail:** scousens@netspace.net.au

2001: A Federation Odyssey

Australian Gardens and Landscapes 1890-1914

The Lecture Programme

By **Howard Tanner**

The Federation era gave Australia many of its distinctive man-made landscapes. Think of spacious antipodean boulevards overhung by giant Moreton Bay figs. The regular lines of frond-topped palms. Undulating hillsides informally punctuated by jacarandas and Illawarra flame trees. The slatted timber shade-house with its ferns and staghorns. And the front porch perfumed by a frangipani, its stumpy fingers adorned with fragrant creamy white flowers. The AGHS Conference celebrated the centenary of this remarkable period, and provided a sequence of talks to explain various facets of its landscape history.

John Rickard introduced the programme with a perspective on the realities of Australia at Federation, a period when Australia was arguably the most productive country on earth, even despite the economic depression of the 1890s. Australia and New Zealand were viewed as the social laboratory of the world, new circumstances enabling many to put aside the inherited constraints of class, and enfranchising women through the one adult, one vote policy. Manoeuvrability was both intellectual and physical, new railways and bicycles providing the average man and woman with better access to work and recreation. While some felt alienated by the Australian landscape, all enjoyed better diet and health, and the benign coastal climate encouraged swimming and a relationship with nature. Ethel Pedley's *Dot and the Kangaroo* encouraged children to respect nature and the native animals, while querying the role of black and white men in the devastation of Australian flora and fauna.

Robert Freestone told of the City Beautiful, of European urban ideals as developed by the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris, and subsequently by American designers. Such improvements were termed 'Civic Art', with a vocabulary of formal parks and parkways, accented by strategic monuments and palatial buildings. Australian architects of the period (W.H. Ellerker, E.G. Kilburn, W. Hardy Wilson and S.A. Neave, are examples) often travelled to Europe via the United States. The major urban planning works in Washington DC, Chicago and Philadelphia were well known to them, along with the grand architecture of McKim, Mead and White.

Melbourne in the 1870s was a basic city of typical British-derived buildings laid out on a practical grid plan beside a river. Beautification through major public works was pursued to enhance the city's character and standing which, allied with the 1880s boom gave rise to 'Marvellous Melbourne'. Key endeavours included the development of major parks and gardens, such as the Fitzroy and Carlton Gardens and the Royal Botanic Gardens; avenue planting in the main city streets; and parkways such as St Kilda Road and Alexandra Avenue.

Friday 26 October & Saturday 27 October

In Sydney John Daniel Fitzgerald saw the harbour as the central landscape element of the city, and sought aesthetic improvement at every turn. Architect John Sulman, determined to gain the title 'the father of Australian town planning', wrote the seminal book on the topic, and played a key role in the Royal Commission for the Improvement of the City of Sydney and its Suburbs (1908-9). Anxious that Melbourne was getting ahead, this sought to reinforce Sydney's planning through new, formal traffic arteries, and beaux arts buildings. Sulman went on to chair (1921-4) the Federal Capital Advisory Committee for the Commonwealth Government.

The 1911-1912 Canberra competition sought to fulfil the dream of an ideal Australian city. **Jeff Turnbull** explained the political background to the competition, the pastoral charms of the Molonglo Valley, and the unusual terms of the world-wide competition, effectively controlled by the American-born politician, King O'Malley. As a result, both the British and Australian institutes of architects rejected the competition and recommended their members not participate. This circumstance brought outsiders to the fore, such as Chicago-based Walter Burley Griffin (working with his wife Marion Mahoney) and the Finn, Eliel Saarinen. The Griffins' winning scheme was an inspired topographical response, triangulated around a lake and three dominant hills, and cleverly marrying the formal and informal. Their architectural intentions for the site are best grasped from Marion's superb sectional renderings and a model reconstructing their ideas commissioned by the National Capital Development Commission in Canberra. The Griffins were invited to Australia to realise their plan, but while Sulman had endorsed their town plan for Canberra, he (and others) questioned their architecture and effectively thwarted the implementation of their design philosophy and architectural character in the Federal capital.

John Viska spoke for **Oline Richards** on the evolution of King's Park in Perth, and the desire to provide a landmark park on a prominent hillside overlooking Perth and the Swan River - one that could equate with Centennial Park in Sydney and the Melbourne Botanical Gardens. It was an 1895 response to Western Australian self-government (1890). At this time Western Australia had only 50,000 white inhabitants, and although Premier Forrest's dream of £100,000 to fully landscape a great park with carriageways lined by exotic trees never came to full fruition, the reality of limited funding and Forrest's own modest designs on parliamentary letterhead had the effect of retaining the original bushland character of most of the site. However it was not until 1961 that the concept of a botanic garden featuring the plants of Western Australia was accepted, and the park's present distinctive character was confirmed and

subsequently reinforced by consciously designed landscapes featuring native plantings.

Many of us have been intrigued by the use of faux rockwork and grottoes. Think of numerous convents, great estates like The Acacias in Adelaide and Yaralla in Sydney, civic improvements at Cook and Phillip Parks (now demolished) in Sydney, and enclosures at Taronga Park Zoological Gardens on Sydney Harbour. **David Jones** outlined the extraordinary career of Charles Robinette, and his success in the creation of shade-houses, rockeries and fountains in both South Australia and Victoria in the late 19th century. As an aside we were shown illuminating pictures of an Adelaide garden before and after the introduction of piped water: dirt became lawn, and a drought hardy, centrally positioned Norfolk Island pine was replaced by a fountain.

Jeannie Sim spoke of the realisation of sub-tropical gardening in Brisbane in the period 1880-1914 and the key roles of William Soutter and Philip MacMahon. Soutter, an Aberdeen-trained doctor, developed the Queensland Acclimatisation Society's Bowen Park and went on to write an influential horticultural column under the pseudonym 'Coolibar' in the *Queenslander* newspaper. MacMahon had trained at Kew, and between 1889 and 1905 gave the Brisbane Botanic Gardens their distinctive character and influenced the use of palms to enhance towns throughout Queensland. Both men were famous for their large wood-slatted shade-houses filled with lush presentations of tree ferns and staghorns. Another feature of the era were tiered fountains made of giant clam shells; there were several in Brisbane, and the most celebrated examples were found in the Queensland Court of the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880-81 and the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London.

Australia at nationhood required special symbols, and often turned to Australian flora to provide distinctive designs. **Nina Crone** told of the battle between the waratah and wattle for national pre-eminence, and the roles of Lucien Henry and R.T. Baker (both based in Sydney) in developing appropriate designs and related public support for them. Henry's designs have just been the subject of a major book and an exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. During this period many women became interested in craft and design, and led by committed individuals like Eirene Mort, they pursued wood carving, leather work, metal work, etc., giving distinctive self-expression to the period in tea cups embellished with waratahs, and chimney pieces enriched by carved, gumnut friezes.

Philippa McMahon explained William Guilfoyle's interest in the pictorial role of individual Australian plants in his grand scheme for the Melbourne Botanical Gardens (as conveyed in Hon.V.N.Hood's panoramic photographs of 1915). She also discussed Guilfoyle's approach to forming a native plant collection in the half-mile long Australian border and the related Eucalyptus Lawn.

Susan Reidy explained the late 19th century's twin aims for parks: firstly to restore the mind through calm and beauty, and secondly to restore the body through physical exercise. Initially lawns and planting provided an attractive setting for passive uses, gradually bandstands and kiosks were introduced, then sporting fields and children's playgrounds. These 'lungs of the city', at first horticultural and pictorial, were increasingly debased for specific sporting requirements.

Tony Dingle assisted by **Tanja Luckins** explored in detail the combination of flood mitigation and beautification works (c.1900) at Alexandra Avenue alongside the Yarra and the resulting new landscape and formal tree-scape with its linear provision for rowing, walking, cycling, horse-drawn vehicles, and riding along the new riverbank. While the role of engineer Carlo Catani was explained, his Florentine background and the possible parallels with the Arno may be worthy of further exploration.

Paul Fox did a wonderful job of getting us 'inside' William Guilfoyle's head. He revealed how Guilfoyle's youthful travels in the South Pacific – whether to Fiji, New Caledonia or his interlude on the family holding on the Tweed River in northern New South Wales – provided powerful images, and a basis for his landscape compositions. And he sought to link these with his reading of European landscape theory. From his youth Guilfoyle knew the Sydney Botanic Gardens well, and was attracted to its freer planted forms where it edged the harbour. He delighted in the horticultural environments of Sydney and Melbourne where spectacular plants (which in the Northern Hemisphere could only thrive in hothouses) could be readily grown out-of-doors. In essence Guilfoyle transposed the scenery and richness of his favourite South Pacific landscapes to create memorable urban parks.

Colleen Morris spoke of the special role of the Sydney Botanic Gardens director, J.H. Maiden, in providing Sydney's (and New South Wales') streets and gardens with a distinctive Federation period character, largely through the introduction of sub-tropical species, especially palms. Maiden felt that a



Panoramic view of the lake in the Botanic Gardens Melbourne, 1915
Photo: V. N. Hood, courtesy La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria

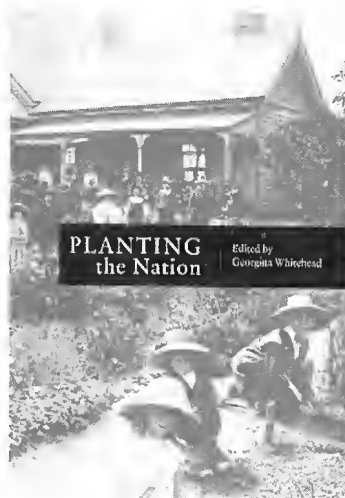
successful Australian planting style could assist a sense of national identity, and used Sydney's Domain and Centennial Park to experiment with landscape design ideas. He saw public parks as special places for the citizens, with bandstands, kiosks, toilets, playgrounds and games areas, though he was vigorously opposed to the alienation of parkland by major public buildings. He adopted the American concept that parks were 'for the greatest good of the greatest number'.

Suzanne Hunt discussed the student garden programmes that formed part of the framework of a new education system in Victoria under Frank Tait in the period 1902 – 1920. While only limited funds and often barren sites were available for the school gardens, Tait encouraged parents and local nurserymen to participate, introducing various incentives and competitions which resulted in teachers and pupils transforming the environs of most state schools. The whole exercise was a constructive piece of social engineering.

Nineteenth century garden practices at first produced elaborate parterres of hedging, annuals and shrubs, often against a backdrop of ring-barked eucalypt forest. Arbor Day was introduced to encourage new tree plantings to provide shade and shelter. On a nationalist note, garden beds were often formed in the shape of Australia (and Tasmania), sometimes with New Zealand in place. This may have reflected a primitive schoolyard geography lesson, but also the intent of the early Federation conferences, which contemplated further Australasian states, namely the two islands of New Zealand.

The Federation era was a remarkable period where all of society was focussed on a national outcome. It was a time concerned with the physical and moral well being of its citizens, when those in authority brought planning, amenity, and aesthetics together for the common good. In essence this great endeavour formed the framework of Australia as we know it.

Howard Tanner is a Sydney architect with a special interest in landscape design and history. He helped found the Australian Garden History Society and was its second chairman. From 1993 to 1996, as Chairman of the NSW Heritage Council, he instigated the study and identification of the surviving colonial gardens in the Sydney region.



Left: *Planting the Nation*, edited by Georgina Whitehead and published by the Australian Garden History Society to commemorate the Centenary of Federation, is available from the AGHS office at 100 Birdwood Ave, Melbourne, 3004

Reviewed in next issue

Gardens of the Mornington Peninsula

The Optional Day

By **Helen Auty**

For a visitor from the United Kingdom this was a day of fascinating contrasts. The weather changed from a cool, sunny morning to an afternoon of soft showers and the gardens visited were strikingly different from each other.

Karkalla and **Offshore**, two gardens merging unobtrusively into the bush and dune land, were a revelation - a really Australian approach to garden design. Their sympathetic development is clear - habitat has been provided for birds and animals, the local ecology is respected and non-indigenous species are selected with care. However, planting is mostly indigenous and conservation of the coastal understorey species is important.

After meeting our hosts, designer Fiona Brockhoff and conservationist Jane Burke, I could hardly wait to explore. Around a corner, Chris Booth's sandstone 'Koonya Beach Columns' appeared boldly against the blue sky, proclaiming an ancient, totem-like presence. But in the 21st century experienced eyes admired the delightfully stylish effects

created everywhere. Loose shells scattered around bushes. The attractive blue/grey timber house. A striped deck-lounger and carefully placed bowls of succulents. The charming garden shed with its pot plants and epiphytes. Terracotta pots in strategic places. And winding down the hill towards the Pinot Noir vineyard, recycled pier beams for steps, bounded by a riot of *Aeoniums*, *Phormium tenax* and *Euphorbia*.

Wit and whimsy were evident. The rustic chair made from old tea-trees, the jolly 'chookhouse' and the veggie patch with its mechanical 'flying gull' scaring the birds; the huge blue-and-white plastic sunflower to challenge the real ones; the partially hidden gnome with his three red-and-white toadstools, and the 'tree of flip-flops' all raised many quiet chuckles. I loved these gardens, but secretly, my favourite part was the outdoor, rain-water bath, complete with soap and nailbrush, and surrounded by deep purple creeper - to my northern European eyes, the height of luxury.

Monday 29 October

In every sense there was a change of scene at **Beleura** - showers greeted us, but fortunately the single-storeyed Italianate 1860s villa was well-served by its wide verandah. Once the summer home of wealthy pastoralist, James Butchart, and latterly belonging to the Tallis family, Beleura is undergoing extensive refurbishment. Anthony Hope, supervisor of the restoration, and Carmel



McPhee, the head gardener, told us about the family and explained the approach to the restoration of both house and garden. Described as 'the last of the Edwardians', Tallis stockpiled clothes, kept all bills, share certificates, and an unrevealing, not to say dull, diary despite the fact that his visitors included personalities like Dame Nellie Melba. He also had a somewhat bizarre taste in ceiling murals (painted by Wesley Pemberthy).

John Tallis was primarily responsible for the Italian formality of the 1950s garden. From the central portico, a vista leads the eye to the perimeter of the property, where there was once an enclosing hedge of golden box. Here, a quartered circle is being laid out between crazy paving pathways. True to the preferences of the late owner, low hedges of golden box are being re-instated, garden sculptures are re-appearing beside a rectangular fountain-pool, and the preferred variegated and gold planting schemes are again in place. A return visit in a couple of years would be fascinating.

Above left:
Beleura, Mount Eliza

Top right:
Aeonium spp. border steps made from pier-beams at Karkalla, Sorrento

Bottom right:
Dame Elisabeth Murdoch and Joan Young, from Hamilton, at Cruden Farm

Contents Page:
Koonya Beach Columns at Karkalla, Sorrento

Photos: Helen Auty



The final visit revealed yet another approach to gardening. Dame Elisabeth Murdoch greeted us most warmly and immediately sped off in her motorised buggy to show us the delights of **Cruden Farm**. The lake (created in 1987) with iris-crowded banks and a central island on which willows and agaves keep company. To me an unusual combination.



The elegant, white weather-board house, with its double height colonnade, standing at the end of an equally elegant curved drive of *Eucalyptus citriodora* (lemon-scented gums). Behind a high hedge, a charming picking garden, bounded by lower formal hedging and citrus trees. Roses, foxgloves and cutting flowers in abundance. A walled garden (attributed to Edna Walling) hides an Australian fountain with koalas as its centrepiece. Elsewhere, a stone wall creates the perfect foil for Douglas Stephen's floating sculpture. Everywhere there are mature trees, some on the National Trust's Register of Significant Trees, and so much more. I can end no better than by taking the words from a plaque in Dame Elisabeth's garden 'There is always music amongst the trees in the garden but our hearts must be very quiet to hear it.'

Helen Auty has a long-standing interest in landscape, design, architecture, gardens and their role in art. Before her retirement she was Design Director at the RSA (Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) in London. She is presently studying for the Diploma of Garden History at the University of London and is a Governor of the Design Dimension Trust.